# IN SEARCH

Cordially,
Mario Levi
1952

# IN SEARCH

## BOOKS BY MEYER LEVIN

REPORTER
FRANKIE AND JOHNNY
YEHUDA
THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN
THE NEW BRIDGE
THE OLD BUNCH
CITIZENS
MY FATHER'S HOUSE
IF I FORGET THEE
(A PICTURE-BOOK)

## TRANSLATIONS

BUCHENWALD DIARY
SHOLOM ASCH'S TALES OF MY PEOPLE

## FILMS

MY FATHER'S HOUSE
THE ILLEGALS

# IN SEARCH

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

## BY MEYER LEVIN

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FOR TERESKA

This is a work of self-examination which necessarily involves examination of my contacts with others. I have endeavored to present truth without distortion or malice, and to select material whose meaning is in the public interest.

M. L.



PART ONE

# AMERICA : The Self-Accused

THIS is a book about being a Jew. I suppose people are somewhat weary of the Jewish problem. The other day while breakfasting at a drugstore counter, I caught a snatch of conversation from the neighboring stools. " ...there was a bunch of them there, carrying signs." "What were they kicking about now?" "I don't know. Didn't we give them Israel... "

But the coming into being of Israel has brought into focus many of our own inner problems, some of them appearing now as not so different from the problems of other people, and some of them unique—for every people has its unique aspects. And it has seemed to me a good time now to examine these problems in myself, for I partake of the general mood for self-examination that has come over the world in this seething lull when we feel as though we are locked up while immense preparations are going on outside, and suddenly the door will be opened and we will be confronted with the final act of civilization. We want to be sure of our own selves, in readiness for this last confrontation.

Artists, particularly writers, sometimes serve society as testing agents; their lives become token lives in the working out of certain problems, for they are apt to free themselves from some of the material conventions in order to follow their moral imperative. And I believe that in following out the sometimes conflicting elements of the Jewish question within myself, I may have served as such a testing agent for my own generation and particularly for the American born. I have been freer to go in

search of the ends of the problem than, let us say, a businessman living in a firmly formed community. So I am telling my own story, not so much, I hope, out a sense of self-importance as out of a feeling that the evidence I have picked up in seeking a solution of this problem can be of general use in bringing Jews to understand this part of themselves a little better, and bringing other people to understand us—and perhaps even themselves—a little better.

Undoubtedly signs of a sense of self-importance and of self-pity and other disproportioned and irritating traits will come into these pages. Nor do I wish to "blame everything on being a Jew" in the way that the Jew often makes his Jewishness his scapegoat. First of all, this is not, I hope, a book of blame or of excuses, but rather a book of investigation and evaluation. Secondly, I recognize that in all of us consistent difficulties arise out of character deformations traceable to many sources, the deepest being particular and personal: but these seeds of deformation as often take root in the general soils of poverty, of racial shame, of sexual frustration, as in the soil of "Jewishness." And even though I risk overevaluation of the Jewish aspect, I intend in this book to try to trace it out in my own life, as a common problem.

It will soon appear that my development as a Jew is inextricably woven with my development as a writer, though there were periods when I tried to separate these two factors. Certainly there are not many people faced with this particular combination as a problem, but perhaps the button manufacturer and the Jewish automobile mechanic will recognize parallels to their own lives, just as I recognized elements parallel to mine in the autobiography of Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who is a chemist.

It is one of the first rules of the novelist that what is most particular is most general. Many years ago I wrote a novel called *The Old Bunch,* minutely studying a group of young people growing up on the west side of Chicago; recently a Frenchman remarked to me that in reading the book he was surprised to find not only that the pattern in the Jewish group reflected what he knew of other American unities, but that he was identifying it with his own circle in France.

I do not, in presenting examples from my works, and in studying my developmental problems, intend to suggest that



these are important works or that I am a writer whose processes must be studied, but simply to use myself as the example of human being I know best.

The impulse to write this book came one day in Paris when I stopped at the Café Dome, now outmoded, and was greeted by a photographer I had known during the war.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"In Palestine," for I had just returned from filming *The Illegals.*

"What are you doing these days?"

Just then I was earning a little money translating stories by Sholem Asch, and I was making a puppet film. And suddenly it struck me that I might have given the same curious answer, in precisely the same spot, some twenty years before. Then too I was stopping in Paris after having seen trouble in Palestine, and I was—the only other time in my life—translating Sholem Asch to earn money to make a puppet film to earn money so that I could go on with my own writing.

So I had come full circle. But the circle was not empty.

In the years between, Palestine had become Israel. As for me, I had published a number of novels, made films, seen something of war, and sought to know myself, particularly as a Jew.

I had since early manhood been passionately involved in the development of a Jewish civilization in Palestine. Twenty years ago this had seemed a strange absorption for an American Jew, but now it appeared that I had not been on the wrong track. But now some of the old questions took a new turn. What was my relationship to Israel? to America? to the world? More insistently than ever I had to ask myself, What am I? and, What am I doing here?

I know that Jews everywhere are asking themselves this question. In America, there are five times as many Jews as in Israel. Despite the immediate, fervent response to the creation of Israel, many Jews outside the homeland argue that its creation will eventually lead outside Jews to assimilation. As when any great new fact appears, there is confusion, before the new lines of orientation are clear. The Jew outside Palestine must define again not only his own relationship to his people—he must

decide how to orient his children, whether to give them more Jewish education or as Arthur Koestler suggests, to try to relieve them of the burden of Jewishness.

There is a tendency to examine these problems only in the light of the new element in the situation—Israel. But actually they are of course old, old problems rooted in all our past.

Though writers are usually automatically considered as intellectuals, I do not feel that I can qualify as one, and I shall not attempt a book of logic or close reasoning. I have sought my own answers as most people do—through re-examining my life. In that search I started to write this book. There will be a good deal of fumbling through incomplete experiences, there will be material that seems not quite relevant. And in writing this book, I could scarcely expect to find all the answers. Indeed I wasn't sure of finding any. But I felt I could define my remaining areas of doubt.

I knew as I began my self-study that I was still not sure how to live as a Jew, and that I still had not learned how to live as a writer. In the literary world, I sometimes believed that my lack of status was due to my perhaps not being a very good writer. Often I tell myself that I don't really care about the big reputation, but that I only want the audience and the money that comes with it in order that I may fully develop whatever talent I possess, instead of frittering away so much of my energy at odd jobs. At other times I believe that I am really a good writer and that my only trouble is bad publishing luck, much of it related to being a Jew. Then I recognize that other Jewish writers, at whatever their literary level, found wide audiences even though they wrote about Jews. Yet I cannot think of any American Jewish writer who worked consistently and successfully in this field; even Ludwig Lewisohn felt a lack of response, and there are matters in my own history which indicate that such Jewish identification has indeed been something of a difficulty, and that it is related to the whole question of the American Jew's attitude toward himself.

Occasionally I stare into the real abyss, discern subjects which I feel incapable of handling, relationships which I cannot convey. Sometimes for a blinding instant I perceive living reality—what there is between people, not what we describe, not what we write down. And then I feel my only trouble is inadequacy.



Yet I hope in this book to exorcise the frustrations I have felt not only through unreached goals in my work, but in its low achievement toward its desired social effect. I want to examine my way of life as a Jew born in America, seeking the full realization of his potentialities. Certainly there are in me character deformations which can be identified around the common "Jewish complex." But if I have had to deal with a sometimes exaggerated form of this complex in my life, the experience may prove usefully illuminating.

And on the positive side, I want to make an account of how much I have been able to achieve toward self-knowledge, in what I may consider as half of my active life, already past.

* * *

My dominant childhood memory is of fear and shame at being a Jew. We lived on Racine Avenue in the notorious Bloody Nineteenth ward of Chicago. It was so known because it was the scene of a political vendetta between Italian ward chiefs. And it was at that time the incubating ground for the gunmen of Chicago's later gangster era.

Before I was born, the ward had been an Irish neighborhood, and in the classic pattern of deterioration in American cities, the Irish had moved on and been supplanted by Jews, the Jews were being supplanted by Italians, who were in turn to vacate the slums to Negroes before the area was at last cleared for a housing project.

My father was a tailor, with a hole-in-the-wall shop near the old Dearborn Station, downtown; he did pressing and mending, and a little buying and selling of used clothing, work-tools, and odds and ends possessed by South State Street derelicts. He worked twelve hours a day, and invested his savings in real estate. At that time, he had overextended himself in buying a three-story brick house containing twelve small flats, on Racine Avenue. Thus, we were landlords.

But as the Jews moved away and rents dropped there was an endless debate as to whether to allow the flats to stand vacant

in the hope of keeping up the quality of the building, or whether to rent to Italians and deteriorate the property. Worried discussions of mortgages, first, second, and even third mortgages, reverberated into the dark little children's bedroom while our parents sat discussing finances in the kitchen. Though we were landlords, though my father "had his own business," we somehow felt that we were worse off than the poorest of the tenants, we were janitors as well as landlords, and our living was always on the edge of peril and collapse.

And in the same way that, as landlords, we felt superior and inferior to our tenants, so we feared and yet somehow felt superior to the dagos and wops who were engulfing us, who had swarms of babies, and whom we considered dirty.

We children believed ourselves to be smarter than the wops. Yet they seemed more American. For though the Italians were immigrants just like our own parents, their children already seemed to have a native right over us, a right to call us sheenie and kike which had overtones of degradation far beyond anything associated with wop or dago. Perhaps we knew that there was something particularly inferior about being a Jew through all the tales we absorbed in childhood, of how the lives of our parents had been in the old country. From our earliest consciousness, we absorbed these tales of our people being kicked around and browbeaten by drunken goyim, and we therefore knew that with our people, in no matter what country they lived, it had always been as it was with us—we were a despised people. While we could yell back at the dagos and wops, we knew from the beginning that our epithets only applied to their old people, who were immigrants and who had green peppers and funny smelly sausage strings hanging in their grocery stores, but the children, we knew, would have nothing to be ashamed of when they grew up, they wouldn't be wops and dagos. We would still be Jews.

This unthought-out realization must have been in us from the start, to make us feel somehow inferior to them. And then, we were plain afraid of them. Going to school each day was like running the gauntlet. By each house, the Italian kids might be laying for us with stones or knives. —I'll cut your nuts off you lousy little sheenie.

On Racine Avenue, our side was still Jewish, but the Italians



faced us from across the street. From our house to the corner we felt nearly safe, but once we turned into Taylor Street on the way to the Andrew Jackson school, we were in entirely Italian territory. The first place of refuge was a friendly Italian's grocery store where a hunchbacked boy would serve us with penny pickles out of a barrel. Then, after peering out to make sure the coast was clear, we would scuttle the rest of the way to school.

Actually, though we lived under constant derisive taunts and promises of beating, and though occasionally stones were thrown and knives flashed, I don't remember being assaulted, and recall instead that in my only fight I was the physical aggressor.

One morning as I was on the way to school some kid started shouting sheenie at me; I rushed at him in sudden rage, and to my own astonishment, knocked him down. I ran away, and for days afterward I was terrified that he would be laying for me with his gang.

I was a bookish child of the sort considered typically Jewish, and I shrank from physical encounter. It was certainly a monumental rage that overrode my fear. I suppose it may be said that I have been repeating this pattern all my life, raging at being called or fancying I was being called a sheenie. In all my life I never again struck anyone, until last year when I hit a man under a provocation curiously associated to the sheenie cry, for that man was a Jew. I shall come to the incident in its place.

There were only a handful of Jewish children left in our class, for by the time we reached the upper grades the Bloody Nineteenth was virtually all-Italian. After school, we few boys went to a Hebrew class in the old and deserted Jewish People's Institute that still functioned in the neighborhood.

One day, after coming home from Hebrew class and gym, I sat down at the kitchen table and wrote a story, passionately, in a little notebook resting on the oilcloth. After supper there was an unusual atmosphere of well-being in the flat. My father was home rather early from his store. My mother had polished the stove that afternoon: it shone, and a kettle steamed. Suddenly, standing with my back to the stove, I felt called upon to commu-

nicate to the family that I would be a writer. I opened the notebook and recited, rather than read, the story to them:

There was an innocent man who had been jailed, and he broke out of prison and hid in the tonneau of a passing car in order to get to the city to prove his innocence. There was a beautiful blonde American girl driving the car.

Many years later it appeared to me that there were obvious unconscious meanings in this little story. Wasn't the jail the restricted precinct of Jewish life to which we were innocently confined? I would break out, and in my childish fantasy I would be carried in the womb of a car driven by an American girl, to be delivered to the great city where I would establish my guiltlessness.

Thus, in my later interpretation, I was seeking an escape from my Jewishness in order to prove to the world that it was no crime. In the symbols of the fantasy, I wished for rebirth.

At the time, my simple adventure story evoked a family debate. My mother and father were aware that the fundamental goal of Jewish family life was for the son to become either a lawyer or a doctor. However, they said, they would not try to influence me or hold me back from any path I chose. They would try to help me. But, my mother worried, could one make a living as a writer?

I appealed to my father, as being in contact with the outside American world. Writers made fortunes, I pointed out. Especially since the invention of movies. Writers made fortunes because everybody bought their books, and then the movies paid them again for using their stories. (How I had already come to this knowledge is a mystery.)

Although I sensed that my parents still hoped I would study medicine or law as a safety career, my nine-year-old self understood that they were too timid to advise me because they felt that even an American child knew better than a pair of immigrants about the way of the world. All through childhood I sensed, and resented, this terrible shame and inferiority in my elders; they considered themselves as nothing, greenhorns, Jews.

Some months after my declaration of vocation I wrote a poem. I was then in eighth grade, a prodigy. My favorite class was the printshop; I suppose I had a notion that I could print my own works when I grew up.

The instructor called me Minsk, and with an amused tolerance



for my zeal, he sometimes permitted me to stay after school, and to attempt color printing.

My great ambition was to use the shop's three-color border of leaves and berries, and to get the red berries to register perfectly on the ends of the stems. I had so little knowledge of nature that I didn't know this was a holly border, but I knew it had something to do with Christmas, and I was a little dubious as to whether I had a right to touch such an item.

One of my uncles was marrying, and I wrote a poem for the wedding and decided to print it myself; for this, the teacher permitted me to use the three-color border. I still recall the poem's concluding couplet:

> ...and when once more the earth turns round,
> Behold, a newborn infant on its ground.

I set up the poem in Old English and got the border printed perfectly. The wedding was to take place at a hall on the corner of Racine Avenue and Taylor Street, and I knew there was a high point in such a festivity when the master of ceremonies stopped the music, and read out telegrams of congratulation. That was when my poem would be read.

But when we reached the wedding hall, I realized that in my excitement I had forgotten to bring along my present. It was locked up in the printshop at school.

There, from the first—even when I myself was the publisher—I seemed to have difficulty in reaching my audience. It is intriguing to wonder whether I didn't forget my gift because of an unconscious feeling that what I did there in the American school printshop, with the Christian holly border, somehow couldn't be brought together with my life amongst my own people. Perhaps the conjecture is farfetched: perhaps I am forcing an adult pattern of thought back upon my childhood.

In high school, I began at once to write stories for the school magazine, and if I recall them here it is not so much to trace literary development as for what they reveal of my inner conflicts as a child, for they were, I imagine, like those of any child

already in the toils of the Jewish question, or the Negro question, or the wrong-side-of-the-tracks psychosis.

My first story, called *Chucklehead,* was about a hero-worshiper who pushed a football star out of the path of an automobile, losing his own leg in the rescue. Then came the big game when the star got all the glory.

Thus, there was on one level an early resentment of the distribution of social reward, and on another level an envy of people who could play the game and get the glory. Undoubtedly in identifying myself with *Chucklehead* I was saying I'd give my leg to share in the American way of life, in sports and easy comradeship, but even with such a sacrifice, I was saying, I'd still be out of it, I'm just not the kind.

To anyone familiar with analytical symbols, there is of course an evident fear of castration. And though I do not intend to elaborate such analysis in this book, I shall sometimes make use of it. The castration trauma was to reappear in other stories.

I became the editor of the school magazine; one day I submitted a batch of material to the faculty advisor, who approved everything except one story. That story, he declared, was plagiarized.

The story was my own, submitted under a pseudonym because I already had one story scheduled for the issue. Why, I demanded, did he think it was plagiarized?

Because no schoolboy could have written it, he declared. It was too mature.

I don't believe I ever again felt so proud. But the story had the trade-mark of my disturbance, for again there was castration. The tale was of a printshop foreman who kept after one of his workers to get a certain job finished on time, deviling him until the poor fellow, in nervous fatigue, chopped off his hand as he trimmed the sheets under the big papercutter. And I confess that some years later I wrote a story about a philosophic butcher, an Italian, picturing him from my childhood memories of Taylor Street. In search of his own inner reality, the butcher hacked off his own hand, with the obsessive cry that it was only flesh, meat such as he handled every day.

There is of course unconscious meaning in this persistent



theme, as there is to the recurrent appearance of overgrown idiots in several of Steinbeck's stories. In my case as an adolescent writer it might be well to dispose first of all of the obvious guilt-reaction to self-abuse. But I had deeper guilts, as a child, and shame of my family was surely among them.

This fear of amputation, as a form of self-punishment, is like the fear of loss of function that often haunts men; in artists it can be a fear of loss of talent, and this fear can also act as a block to creativity. It is a fear that in expressing oneself one will tell something one is trying to hide, reveal one's secret shame, a shame that one knows to be unjustified, and over wich one is therefore guilty. This was the child's guilt at being secretly ashamed of his people.

As an adult a phrase reverberates in my mind, linked to tales of the cutting-off of hands—"If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning!" Thus the child's fear seems bedded in antiquity, in a tribal injunction against the desertion of one's people, a fear of the wrath of Jehovah, the powerful father in heaven who holds one to account for this great sin.

Has my long search in adult years been a result of this inner guilt and trembling, this plague of so many Jewish children, indeed of so many immigrant children who suffer a conflict because of their sense of owing duty and respect to their parents, even while they feel a kind of superiority to their parents through their own status as natives instead of greenhorns? Has my compulsion in adult years to retrace the steps of my people in exile been a penance for that early conflict? Does the logic of it lead back to the prayershawl and phylacteries?

The high school faculty adviser could scarcely have been aware of all these implications in my little story; to him the tale of the amputated hand seemed too morbid to have come directly out of the brain of a twelve year old. I confessed the authorship and he accepted my word that the story was original.

We moved to the Douglas Park district, where the Jews had once more caught up with the Irish. Early in the evenings, we kids used to roam up and down Twelfth Street, feeling the excitement of the restless neighborhood swarm. We would stand

pressed in the crowd on the corner of St. Louis Avenue, listening to Aaron, the atheistic soap-box orator. One evening, directly on coming home, I sat down and wrote a sketch about the orator and the needle-trades workers in the crowd, the arguments about Ingersoll and philosophy, the dreamy wish of the little Jews some day to go away and seek the answer to all these questions—"Maybe tomorrow... but no, tomorrow they had to go to work."

At that time, Ben Hecht was the local literary idol. He was writing his sketches called *A Thousand And One Afternoons In Chicago;* they appeared on the back page of the *Daily News.* My street-corner story was in the same form, though less romantic in manner. I sent the sketch to him, and received it back with a sheet of scrawled praise saying, "You can write," and advising me to send my story to the greatest god of all, H.L.Mencken.

I was certain that I had arrived. I sent the sketch to Mencken at the new *American Mercury,* and it came back with a kindly note.

Now I began sending out stories to the magazines. I knew nothing of agents or professional methods, except for what I had read in *Martin Eden.* This book had a terrifying effect on me, as I completely identified myself with the struggling author and absorbed the conviction that the life of a writer consisted in mailing out fat envelopes and watching for thin ones to come back but receiving only fat ones.

I was soon enough aware that the big magazines didn't buy stories about Jews. Of course the stories I was sending out were probably unusable for other reasons, but the awareness of this taboo was to have a real effect on my life. On the one hand, I absorbed the basic writing axiom, "Write about what you know about," and on the other hand I was barred from communicating exactly that.

My encounter with this taboo was undoubtedly parallel to racial encounters with barriers in various professions, schools, housing areas and in government. In the beginning, I reacted by stubbornly sending out stories of Jewish content. Later I was to give my Jewish characters names out of that special nonesuch category in American magazines, where everyone is Terrell, Fenton, Denton, Dale, Glenn, Alicia, or Kent. What I did in fiction, many sons of immigrants did in life. And a curious conversion of this subterfuge was to take place in later years,



after writers like Saroyan had proved that immigrants could be quaint, when Jewish writers began to disguise sheenies as more acceptable Poles or Greeks, turning Rabinovitch into Theodopoulos. At one stroke they were propagating the idea that Jews were just like everybody else, and making their work a bit more salable.

But in my high school days I was still trying to find publications that had no taboos, no numerus clausus about Jewish stories. One summer, working as a name-sorter in the telephone directory shop, I discovered that the lad next to me was also a would-be writer, and in our professional market discussions he called my attention to the *Ten Story Book,* a lurid little magazine published in Chicago, with the subhead, "a magazine for iconoclasts." My friend was sure such a magazine would have no taboos. I didn't want to be seen buying the sexy periodical, but accomplished the act furtively one day on South State Street, in order to secure the editorial address.

The story I sent them was a sort of Fannie Hurst ghetto tale about a Jewish boy who was ashamed to have his gentile sweetheart encounter his Maxwell Street family. One day his girl insisted that they go slumming along the pushcart ghetto street, and when she stopped to bargain at his father's stand, he pretended not to know his own father. I received ten dollars for this unconscious bit of autobiography, and a warm note from the editor, Harry Stephen Keeler, later known as a writer of detective novels.

Now I entered the University of Chicago. In the class of James Weber Linn, in my second year, I began writing a series of interrelated stories, each of which concerned a failure in one of the arts. Linn himself occasionally referred to the novels he had published in his younger days; he was a character on the campus, noted for his vigorous language, and for the cigarette that dangled perpetually from his lips. Looking at him, I wondered and feared for my life as a writer, for what made a writer stop? This terror of an imperfect or fading talent possessed me. This sense of doom could be partly explained on the basis of youthful Weltschmertz, but the stories themselves showed my maladjustment.

The first tale was about a poet with a compulsive sense of form. He was most sensitive to beauty in modern mechanical objects, and in his rambles around Chicago the artist loved to watch the movements of railway semaphores, imagining them in dancing attitudes. One night he changed the arrangement of a semaphore arm, to conform to a pattern in his mind, regardless of the wreck that might follow.

I had no idea that my story revealed a belief that the artist was in conflict with society, that he had to rearrange the signals even if his vision proved destructive.

My story achieved the distinction of being read on top of the daily pile. A literary magazine was being started on the campus. A class ahead of me was a book-lover named John Gunther who was said to be in direct communication with H. L. Mencken. Around Gunther were lesser literary lights who joined in founding *The Circle.* Now, on emerging from Linn's classroom, one of these said, "Of course you'll give us the story for *The Circle.*" He was a Jewish intellectual, but of a sort I had not known on the west side. He was a German Jew, and a fraternity man.

It was then, in college—as happens in the lives of so many Americans—that I made some social discoveries. I suppose these discoveries come in college because it is there that we first encounter people from other communities. Many years ago, Vincent Sheean wrote how his first deep awareness of prejudice came at the University of Chicago when he discovered that Jews could not be accepted into his fraternity. To a Jew, the discovery came on still another level. For after finding that there were gentile and Jewish fraternities, I realized that there were the "better" Jewish fraternities, and that the distance between a south-side German Jew and a west-side Russian Jew was as the distance between the society page of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Daily Jewish Forward.*

And I made a parallel discovery in college: by becoming a member of the intelligentsia one could achieve a semblance of equality on many planes; one even became acceptable to fraternity folk, Jew and gentile. The intellectual's conventional attitude of protest was to declare that he was not a fraternity man, on principle. Actually this covered a fearful dismay over



the first encounter with schematized prejudice in people toward whom one felt otherwise attracted.

Thus, through the German Jewish friend who had real American friends, I felt myself raised to the level of fraternity men; I had proved to myself that there was truth in the American principle that a man was measured by his ability. There was a purer kind of reward for writing, which I tasted when my story, *The Poet,* appeared in *The Circle.* I saw a girl sitting on a bench reading the magazine. Passing, behind her, I noticed that it was my story that held her spellbound. I lurked in the background; when she came to the end she breathed deeply, and looked far off, dreamily. It was as though she had said out loud, "It's beautiful." I went on my way, content.

When I had completed my series of stories I put them together in a book called *Septagon,* and carried it downtown to Ben Hecht. Hecht and Maxwell Bodenheim were then publishing a weekly paper called *The Chicago Literary Times,* which I considered I had wittily paraphrased as the *Literary Dimes.* Some days later I sidled into their little Clark Street office for the verdict. The team was in good form, and the solemn college kid was legitimate prey.

"What do you want to get published for?" Hecht demanded.

I could think of no answer, being as yet inarticulate of the intense need for contact and interplay between artist and audience. Indeed, those first stories, involved with my own inner fears, were something of a cry for reassurance. Hecht continued cleverly to describe the futility of being published, to laud the pure artist's goal of creation for oneself, rather than to submit one's works to the booboisie for desecration. I babbled something and fled.

It is curious that these two literary men suffered fates illustrative of the opposite poles of our schema. Bodenheim retained the attitude of the garret artist; at intervals in the coming years rumors floated about concerning him. He was found delirious in a Greenwich village gutter; he was a communist; he was in Bellevue with the D.T.'s. Hecht became one of the highest-paid writers in Hollywood.

Despite Hecht's sermon, I took my manuscript to his own

publisher, Pascal Covici, who presided over a basement bookshop on Randolph Street. It was Covici who had brought out *A Thousand And One Afternoons in Chicago,* and his shop, a block from the *Chicago Daily News*, had become the Mecca for young literati.

My first little book of course didn't get published. I knew this was as it should be. I had to develop. I was in the city of the great American literary tradition, the city of Dreiser and Sandberg. Every week, Harry Hansen informed me on the book page of the *Chicago Daily News* that the city was the literary capital of America and that it was in the height of a literary renaissance. The litany was repeated, Dreiser, Sandberg, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, Harriet Monroe, Floyd Dell, Ben Hecht, Maxwell Bodenheim. Many of these writers had worked on the *Chicago Daily News*. One's development as a writer therefore required an apprenticeship on the *News*. And so one day I went there to look for a job.

Actually there was no real need for me to earn money while in college; at this period our family was comparatively affluent. My father had traded his real estate upward until he now owned a six-flat building on Independence Boulevard, the fanciest street on the west side. And we had a Buick.

I was impelled to seek a job not only by literary consideration. I was impelled by the fear that was in every child: would I ever be able to hold my own, to earn a living in the world of men? I was impatient to try myself, a west-side Jew in the downtown world. Perhaps this fear is exaggerated in us because of the saturated climate of competition in which we grow, hearing ceaselessly the legends of self-made men, of newsboys who fought their way to riches, and of prize-winning scholars who worked their way through college and yet found time to captain the football team.

One afternoon I took the L downtown, and stumbled through the ancient corridors of the *Daily News*. The paper was then housed in a patchwork of decaying buildings, all leaning upon each other. They were connected by enormous squeaky firedoors, and the connecting rooms were on different levels so that one either tumbled or stubbed one's toes in passing from one room to another.

A one-armed Lithuanian, operating a pull-rope elevator, had



deposited me on the fourth floor where I was confronted by a half-paralyzed old man at a reception desk. He was deaf. I yelled that I wanted to see the editor, and in the same roar had to announce that I was seeking a job. He went away, and presently a large-headed, waist-high hunchback appeared. Questioning me, he discovered that I had been born in the Bloody Nineteenth. And then it turned out that it was his family that had kept the grocery store on Taylor Street where my sisters and I had bought penny pickles, and it was he who had served us. Now, Simon Morocco was secretary to the editor of the *News,* Henry Justin Smith. Winking conspiratorially, Simon led me through a series of firedoors to the desk of a black-garbed man who seemed to be made of pressed wood. This was the famous editor who had made the *News* a literary center.

In those days one didn't apply for a newspaper job in order to become a journalist. At least, not on the *Chicago Daily News*. One applied in order to become an author. A reporter's job was merely a way of earning a living while one "wrote."

I showed Smith my testimonial from Ben Hecht saying I could write, and secured a part-time job in the traditional starting place, as a picture chaser.

Simon Morocco conducted me through more gloomy corridors, turning me over to an individual who was even thinner than Smith. The cadaverous picture editor, named Hume Whitaker, also, as I soon learned, dreamed of being a writer, and composed his picture captions as though they were free-verse poems.

So there I was in the incubator of Chicago authors.

I continued on the *News* as a picture chaser, campus reporter, and presently as a feature writer. The paper has since then passed through several changes of ownership; it is now housed in a modern skyscraper and devoted largely to sensationalism. Smith is dead, and the imposing names have disappeared from the editorial and book pages, and the once remarkable foreign service has disintegrated. But even in my time the atmosphere around the paper was not the boisterous front-page roar that one might expect from the legend of Chicago, but sickly and decayed and cynical; I was no doubt deeply affected by it.

In the editorial rooms there was a collection of individuals who were like a symbolic show of the thwarted, sickly, inner

self of the city. At the center of the copy desk sat an epileptic who had every few weeks to be carried out to his hotel. Another copy reader had a deformed palette, and when excited gave out strange gurgling hollow roars. One of the reporters limped severely. One of the editors suffered from a severe gastric disorder, and lived only on large doses of soda, which he spooned into himself at intervals from a jar on his desk. Another of the reporters suffered from war nerves and occasionally collapsed in taxicabs.

Looking around the newsroom, one sometimes had the impression of living in a sick, crippled world. At other times one felt that all these individuals had been gathered by a tender spirit, and indeed Smith was the conventional figure of an executive with a forbidding exterior, all sentiment within. It was a Sherwood Anderson world.

Though Smith rarely talked to me, I had the feeling that his watchful eye was upon me, and that I was one of his boys, under remote control. Yet I felt that I had come too late for the warm literary group life around the *News*. I did not dare intrude in the secred precincts of Shlogl's restaurant, where such wits as Keith Preston, Harry Hansen, Smith and Sandberg were said to gather daily at a round table. I was intimidated not only by the prices but by the feeling that I lacked worldliness. I lunched, instead, across the street at a little delicatessen counter where one could get a real, west-side corned beef sandwich.

During summer vacations I worked as a full-time reporter. Ben Hecht had moved to New York, and I became the star feature reporter, feeling like the inheritor of an oversize mantle. My work consisted largely of two-minute railway station interviews with movie stars who were passing through Chicago; I was also called upon for detailed descriptions of gangster funerals, for that era had begun.

Then came the Leopold-Loeb case.

From the day of the finding of the mutilated body of the little boy Franks, this crime fascinated the world, and little else occupied our minds in Chicago. It seemed to us that we were in the center of the world through its purest crime—a crime,



as we thought, for crime's sake. It was an intellectual crime, committed by two brilliant university boys in, it seemed to us, an almost abstract experiment in immorality, for the element of sexual perversion was not then generally understood. And we of the *News* felt ourselves to be at the epicenter of this crime of intellect, for two of our reporters, Mulroy and Goldstein, broke the case by matching the ransom note to the typewriter that connected Leopold and Loeb with the murder.

The murder stood before me as a personal lesson in morality, for both criminals were precocious students at the University of Chicago, like myself, and of my own age. Both were readers of Nietzsche, Cabell, Schopenhauer. I was not personally acquainted with them, as they, like their victim, were members of extremely wealthy south-side Jewish families. But it was inevitable that their "crime of decadence" should appear to me as a symbol. I, the west-side boy, had turned my precocious energy into accomplishment; they, the rich south siders, turned the same qualities toward destruction.

In the Jewish community there was one gruesome note of relief in this affair. One heard it, uttered only amongst ourselves —a relief that the victim too had been Jewish. Though racial aspects were never overtly raised in the case, being perhaps eclipsed by the sensational suggestions of perversion, we were never free of the thought that the murderers were Jews. And I believe that beneath the very real horror that the case inspired, the horror in realizing that human beings carried in them murderous motives beyond the simple motives of lust and greed and hatred, beneath all this was a suppressed sense of pride in the brilliance of these boys, a sympathy for them in being slaves of their intellectual curiosities, a pride that this particular new level of crime, even this should have been reached by Jews.

In a confused and awed way, and in the momentary fashionableness of "lust for experience," I felt that I understood them, that I, particularly, being a young intellectual Jew, had a kinship with them.

When the trial hearings began, I was sent to write features. The father of one of the boys sat shaking his head, muttering over and over, "Why me? I didn't do anything. Why does it come on me? What did I do?"

Remotely, I felt then and have always felt that this was a

clue, and that it was related in some way to myself, to my people. I know nothing of the upbringing of Leopold and Loeb, only of their crime, but in itself it seemed to me to show a need for contact that expressed itself in violence. Their act was an extreme expression of an unwholesomeness perhaps due to our being strangers to our parents and our past, unsure of our place in society.

It is possible that I have forced this event, too, into the mold of my own preoccupation. But I believe there was a subterranean connection between this crime and the theme of my first long piece of writing, done at this time.

While I was under the paternal eye of Smith, downtown, I had at last reached the class of Robert Morss Lovett, at the university. This was the final course in English composition, devoted to major writing projects; I was writing a play.

Following the axiom to write about what I knew, I was using my west-side background. The theme of the play must have emerged from my subconscious troubling, for it was of a father and son search, surely related to the sense that we, of the generation born in America, had lost contact with our immigrant parents.

The central figure of the play was an old man who had fled Russia's long-term military conscription in his youth, and had somehow become separated from his wife and child. Now in America he was obsessed with the idea that his lost son was grown into a great man. He sat by a window, dreaming that some day his son would walk by and that he would by instinct recognize his offspring.

The son, in my conception, was a simple baker, a good man, and therefore great. I was reading Gorki and Dostoievsky; the Moscow Art Theater had passed through Chicago. But aside from these influences, there was certainly a source in the Jewish legends I had heard in my childhood about the tsadikim, the innocent souls for the sake of whose virtue the world was left undestroyed. All unknowingly, these legends formed the basis of my standard of value.

I felt even then that the subject of my play represented a great troubling within me, an effort to link myself to the gener-



ations that came before America, to the whole past of Jewish life. It seems to me now that this play was a way of saying I was a lost son, and that somewhere my father, the father of my people, was waiting for me. This same theme was to recur, in another form, much later in my writing.

* * *

It was the fashion in those days to pretend that one could get nothing out of college and that the best idea was to double up on courses and graduate as quickly as possible. And indeed, I recall that one had to stumble on a great deal that was of primary interest and that should have been taught. I became curious about Marx and drew *Das Kapital* out of the library; I ploughed through most of it but felt that the book was repetitious and that I had grasped the main idea. Then I began to fear that I was a surface reader and a surface writer.

Aside from Lovett, I felt no contact whatever with my instructors. Lovett is regarded as one of America's greatest teachers of writing. With him, as with Smith, I felt chiefly the warmth of encouragement, and I suppose in the end that is all a teacher can give a young writer. The teacher can confirm the beginner's feeling that he has some talent, and can make him feel that he should go on writing, that an older man is standing and watching over his shoulder, and will let him know if he heads into a wrong direction. In the case of the youngster working in fields unknown to his parents—not only the immigrant's child, but, in the dynamism of modern society, any child who goes beyond the social and intellectual limits to which his family has been confined—this leads to a seeking of a father-substitute in the teacher. Nearly everyone has known this to some extent, for with it comes an obscure sense of disloyalty to the parent, who is somehow made inferior. And the guilt grows. In my case, both the teacher and my mentor downtown were obviously substitute fathers and there must have been an additional guilt in me, for they were gentiles.

As a result of my stories in *The Circle,* I one day received a letter from a magazine called the *Menorah Journal.* I was asked to submit material to this cultural magazine of Jewish life. Several of my west-side sketches were accepted. I discovered that the magazine stood very high in O'Brien's annual short story rating, that it was a kind of *Dial* magazine for the Jews. I felt a slight uneasiness that my first serious acceptance should be in what I considered a limited world, for all that I wrote seemed to flow into this side channel. Yet according to what I had been brought up to believe, America was a melting pot. Later, I supposed, I would develop into an American writer.

* * *

I was eighteen and a college graduate. John Gunther, who had worked beside me on the *News,* had gone to Europe on a cattle boat. That was the thing to do after graduation. With Will Geer, who had directed our campus dramatic club, and Eddie Robbin, who also wanted to write, I hitchhiked east. In New York I had lunch like a real author with Elliot Cohen, who had "discovered" me for the *Menorah Journal.* He gave me introductions to people in Europe. We hiked to Montreal where we paid fifteen dollars each to be permitted to work our way to England, feeding cattle.

This was the high period of American expatriates in Paris. We knew we had to go to the Café Dome, study art, and practice sex. Eddie promptly met a "little Sorbonne girl" and went to live in a sixth floor room on the Boul' Saint Michel. Will Geer disappeared. I went to live in a pension on Boulevard Montparnasse. In the mornings, Eddie and I sketched in the Grande Chaumière.

Now indeed I felt that everything essential had been left out of my education. I tried to swallow whole all art, music, and literature. Though a university graduate in the liberal arts, I had never read Homer, the Bible, Dante! I tried to assimilate Eli Faure, Joyce, Proust. Pascal, and even Descartes, in one gulp.



From the *Menorah Journal* I had a letter to an artist named Marek Szwarc whose work had been reproduced in the magazine—hammered copper bas-reliefs on biblical themes. I had been deeply impressed by them. One day in my pension I got into conversation with the man next to me at table. He was an artist. Did he happen to know an artist named Marek Szwarc, living here in Paris? He was Szwarc himself.

The coincidence of our meeting soon appeared to me as an act of fate. Szwarc was living in the pension with his wife and their little daughter, Tereska. I spent much time with them, and it was through Marek Szwarc that I first began to sense the depth of Jewish tradition, and to realize that it was appropriate for a Jewish artist to occupy himself with the material of Jewish life, that he need not feel ashamed of it, need not feel that it was limiting, need not feel that it was of minor value. For Szwarc was an example to me of an artist living in the cultural capital of the world, aware of the modern search for pure forms and abstract subject material in the plastic arts, aware also of the classic movements in art, and of art that was an end in itself, yet he had chosen to develop the material of his own folk.

As he worked then to a great extent with Old Testament subjects I began to feel an interest in the aesthetic products of religion, whether Jewish or Christian. With the Szwarcs, I began to seek out cathedral art, to visit churches. I was not aware then of the neo-Catholic movement in certain intellectual circles in Paris, and did not know of Jacques Maritain and his following. The Szwarcs had been converted, but kept their conversion secret during many years. Thus it happened that my own contact with the Church, through them, remained an entirely aesthetic experience. Even when I read the *Lives of the Saints* it was as literature, and if my friends had any thoughts that I might be led to religious faith through aesthetic excitement, they never brought them forward; I was perhaps lightly exposed, but never proseletyzed. Indeed, I was conversely led to an interest in Judaism for, as I later understood, the Christianity of my friends was felt as an extension of Judaism, and they never ceased regarding themselves as Jews in the full sense. Hence, they were interested in Jewish as well as Christian mysticism, and it was through them that I was led to an identi-

fication with Jewish material, since I regarded the Christian part merely as an offshoot.

The contact with the Szwarcs and their friends served to awaken me to a realization of the position of religion in modern society. For as an American I had always assumed that religion was a declining force, that it was old-country stuff, and a negligible factor in our own lives. Even the religion of the Christians in America seemed disconnected from their actual lives, for I had come into contact with it in childhood through Italian children who were in revolt against their immigrant parents and therefore disparaging of their Church, and in the university I had mostly encountered young intellectuals who made jokes about chapel.

In our own Jewish community too there had been the confusion of religion with old-country ways. Our parents, trying to adjust to their new environment, were dropping the rituals and customs of orthodoxy; little by little, the kosher laws fell away, and only a greenhorn kissed the mezuzah on the doorpost, and it was no longer necessary to keep off streetcars on the Sabbath. What they were dropping were ways of observance rather than religious ways, but it was difficult for their American children, and indeed for the parents themselves to make this differentiation, and the net effect was a sense that religion no longer had much to do with people's lives.

This was to be clarified in the reform temples, which found their way to a type of service more acceptable to American Jews. But for the first American-born generation, this complex upheaval only created a greater gulf between themselves and their parents, a greater doubt in parental authority.

In Europe, I began to feel the climate of religion, began to understand how people are brought up in a church atmosphere and surrounded by its forms so that their religion enters their every act, as had been the case with our own orthodox forbears in eastern Europe. I began to understand how, for the French, their very names, after the saints, identified and recalled them to their Church a thousand times a day, and how their holidays, their days for receiving gifts, surrounded them all their lives with Church motives. I began to see how in myriad ways, every day, a people renders observance, And it was only by



watching something of Christian life in France that I began to understand something of Jewish life of the past.

Szwarc's work pictured the Polish Jews in their long coats, with their beards and their earlocks, and these Jews began to have a dignity for me. They were the people of my immediate past, now viewed as worthy ancestors rather than as ridiculous long-beards. I didn't know yet how profoundly this realization was stirring within me, and that something within me required that I go all the way back to find out where I came from. Yet I started on the route, in a physical sense.

With Eddie, I bicycled to Vienna where for the first time we saw an approximation of an east-European ghetto; we were shocked and frightened at the misery, the lack of dignity, the hopelessness of the inhabitants. I had an impulse then to go on to Poland, but was perhaps afraid; Eddie went on to his parents' village in Czecho-Slovakia while I wandered over Italy and Greece, and finally went to Palestine.

For a young American to have gone to Palestine in 1925 was itself strange. In those days Zionism was a question that had scarcely penetrated to Jews born in America. It was something dealt with in the Yiddish press, it was something that occupied the bearded ones from the old country, and if an American Jew happened to be dragged to a Zionist meeting he found that the speakers talked with Russian accents, or simply reverted to Yiddish. My own family, indeed, had no interest in the movement.

I don't know what made me go to Palestine unless it was the curiosity of the young mind, sending out feelers in all directions. And I went also, as I had gone to Italy and Greece, because Palestine was one of the cradles of culture.

There was an event on my itinerary. Marvin Lowenthal of the *Menorah Journal* suggested that if I did go to Palestine I might write about the opening of the Hebrew University.

The experience of Palestine was electrifying. I felt like a discoverer. Here were Jews like early Americans, riding guard at night in vigilance against hostile natives, pioneering in the malarial marshes, and living in communal groups.

And more powerfully than in Italy or Greece, I was possessed by the physical beauty of the land, so deeply moved that I began

to wonder whether my reactions were not instinct with racial memory.

I was extremely excited by the ceremony of the founding of the Hebrew University. In the open-air theater hacked out of the side of Mount Scopas, looking down beyond the platform upon the awesome raw hills of the Judean wilderness that dropped away to the Dead Sea, I felt an overwhelming rightness of place.

This view must have penetrated to my very bones, for Mount Scopas remained with me as the one place in all the world to which I must forever return. It was as though there echoed in me the call that for so many centuries brought aged Jews to Jerusalem so that they might one day be buried on the Mount of Olives. But it was not an impulse for eternal rest that I felt on Mount Scopas, rather an elation, and with this a strong desire to communicate to the world my discovery of this beautiful place, a desire so powerful that I could not dismiss it from my mind until twenty years later when I put this scene into a film.

I remained only a few weeks in the country on this first visit to Palestine, but the visit was like a shock whose full effect does not appear until years later. Though I knew I was not done with the land, my first impulse was to flee, to recontact America for fear of being seduced, of losing myself in a movement that was perhaps not meant for me—for wasn't it my destiny to become the great American novelist?

* * *

As soon as I returned to Chicago I began to plan my literary career. First, I had to write a book, then I would be famous, and the rest—the Pulitzer Prize, the Nobel Prize, would follow in due course.

I had an idea for a book. It concerned the relationship of printed news—the appearance of things—to the reality of events. This was not so much a search for the "news behind the news" as a wish to somehow render the fluidity of experience that became lost in the arid little paragraphs of newspaper stories. It seemed to me that if I could put down precisely what happened,



down to the most trivial detail in the most trivial of events, I would inevitably capture reality. Though this impulse stemmed from Joyce and Gertrude Stein, it took form in me one day when I was sent on a wild-goose chase by my city editor; I was to watch a house where, a neighbor had reported, a young girl was being held in slavery.

It was a shanty in the old Jewish-Italian neighborhood, and it was a Jewish neighbor who had reported the dark doing by which, he contended, a Jewish girl was being "hypnotized" into bondage by an old Italian woman. I passed half a day intently watching for the slightest clue to the life that went on in that closed little house, and through my tension and the stimulation of the myth, a whole mass of insignificant activity fermented into meaningful detail. I was undoubtedly stimulated by the myth's echoes of my childhood fears. As I hung around that house, knowing that so far as news value went I was only killing an afternoon, I nevertheless felt a tremendous life force even in the tremble of a window shade, and I suddenly decided to write down all this as I saw it, I would do this with every story I was sent on, from court scene to celebrity interview, and contrast the results to what I wrote for the paper as "news," in an effort to get a reflection of city life. Actually, I had conceived a documentary novel, perhaps the first.

I was then working on Hearst's *Chicago Evening American.* One day I was called to the desk; the city editor explained that one of Hearst's periodic staff-slashing orders had come through, and the young unmarried reporters had to be dropped.

I could now write my novel, out of the copious notes I had accumulated. But I didn't know how to go about writing a book. I was living in the family flat, and I felt self-conscious about staying at home and being out of a job. One morning I took my portable typewriter and went wandering around the near north side, Chicago's Greenwich Village. I was like a cat sniffing odd corners, looking for a place to have kittens. There was an apartment building on the corner of Michigan and Grand, and I climbed the stairs with the vague idea of finding out whether the attic might be for rent. The door was open. The attic was barren except for a few old boxes and a little pile of papers on the floor. There were some drawings amongst them, rather good. One was signed Rexroth, a name later known in poetry. I thought

probably an artist had lived there and moved out. Or perhaps someone like myself had accepted the open door. At any rate, I set my typewriter on a box, sat on another box, and went to work.

Every morning I sneaked up there and wrote an episode.

One morning as I was at work, a young man wandered in. He didn't ask how I came to be there, but started a general conversation, finally hinting that he was a part-time detective, just nosing around. Then he left. I never understood the visit. But in this strange homeless fashion I wrote my first novel.

When I had written all the city episodes, I felt I could bind them together by a personal story of the development of the reporter, of his awakening to various realities, of the effect on his own life of his contact with the city. But the reporter was vaguely, even evasively drawn. Reading the book in later years, I felt it was as though I had been afraid to commit myself. There was an episode, for instance, in which he talked to a blatantly anti-Semitic lawyer, and during the interview I had the reporter wondering whether he should say out loud, "By the way, I'm a Jew." It was as though I myself had been struggling with this question all through the book, for this passage was the only reference to my hero's background. And there was something even more curious: in a satiric description of a Kiwanis luncheon, I spoke with distaste, through my reporter, of a fat, "loose-faced Hebrew."

I was, I suppose, trying to show myself on one level that I was a real American, that I could partake of American attitudes, and on a second level I must have argued to myself that I need not shrink from writing realistically, even disagreeably about my people so long as I was clearly writing as a Jew. The few lines were of scant importance in the novel, but they reveal the struggle that was going on in me, with my self-hatred on the Jewish question.

I dedicated the book, in what I thought was the sardonic Chicago manner, "To Whomever It May Concern." Then I did a curious self-conscious thing. As a forenote, I wrote a typical little interview in the style of my railway-station celebrity interviews. "As the renowned writer stepped from the train, he was surrounded by a swarm of newspapermen who asked him to comment on his latest novel. 'I have nothing to say,' he said."



Inwardly, I believed or hoped that my novel had many things to say, and that critics would rise up to deny my forenote. Yet the remark was a confession of acute self-doubt. I somehow knew I had evaded matters that I really needed to communicate, and hoped that in spite of myself they had managed to get said. Only today I realize that some of these feelings did break through my own censorship.

The book didn't get published until a few years later, when it met a curious fate. But in the meantime, while *Reporter* was being rejected, I was a confused young man without a very precise idea of what I should do. Instead of returning to newspaper work, I found myself with a job as Club and Social Director of the Jewish People's Institute.

It seems astonishing that I could turn so suddenly from my role as a worldly young newspaperman to Jewish social service. Through the ensuing years I was to perform this dance several times, almost as though I took turns at being American and Jew, as though I had to keep the two personalities apart.

The Institute still remained as a tiny island of Jewish life in the old Nineteenth ward. I convinced myself that, since the job left my mornings free, I would have time for writing. Moreover, one of the clubs over which I would hold sway was the dramatic group, and I had intentions of staging my own plays. And having just written the novel of the American newspaperman, I wrote a little play about an American Jewish family visiting Palestine, and the daughter falling in love with a chalutz, and wondering whether she should remain in Eretz Israel. It must be understood that I was confronting this problem in 1926, and since I did not see many others of my generation disturbed by it, I felt my own preoccupation to be unusual, and felt again that there was "something wrong" with me in my Jewish obsession. I do not mean here to suggest that I was ahead of my time, but as an artist I had perhaps reacted more sensitively to the first soundings of a call which nearly every Jew has since then heard, however remotely, within himself. The question of the return is one which no person can answer for another, even for his own kin. But the experience of others sometimes leads one to self-understanding, and I am attempting, in this book, to offer such experience, not only my own, but of what I have seen.

After the little Palestine play, I staged my college drama;

I decided to play the role of the aged invalid Jewish father myself, though in writing the play I had surely identified myself with the lost and "good" son. It seems to me that I was driven to act out the eternal cycle, to stage within myself the myth of the father-search.

Theatre-struck, I went to Provincetown that summer and rented a loft certified to have housed Eugene O'Neill when he wrote *Anna Christie.* There I wrote a kind of *Peer Gynt* called *Run Sheep Run,* about man's eternal quest for freedom; the play ended with a scene in wich the world was divided into two ketledrum halves, while the antagonists sat each on his half, each demanding the right to undertake a search in the other's domain.

By then, I had conceived a passion for the marionette theater, in the Gordon Craig vein, and I returned to Chicago to set up a puppet shop in our basement.

I dreamed thus of producing my own plays. I wanted to be a craftsman-artist, with a direct relationship to my public; and curiously, I was remembering the Jewish tradition of the scholar earning his living by handicraft.

In this pathetic plan there was also the reflex of the artist against the industrial age; if only one could find some forgotten little back door to the time when a man could live by the work of his hands, when a storyteller could recite his tales to an intimate circle. How many times have I heard young writers, young artists explain their schemes to earn a living through some little enterprise, as though by making themselves very small they might escape unnoticed in the world of economic mastodons. To have a small rental library and live behind it and write, to have a little ceramics shop and make sculpture on the side.... I need so little, the artist pleads, it'll surely work.

In the basement, I prepared two puppet plays. One, inevitably, was a father-son story—the legend of Abraham and Isaac. I presented this at Jewish centers for children. Meanwhile I was preparing a complex experimental drama, George Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight,* with cubistic marionettes and abstract settings.

At the entrance to Lincoln Park was an odd little structure, a



kind of Hansel-and-Gretel house built out of remains of the Great Chicago Fire. I rented the Relic House, and set up my marionette theater, together with a young west-side painter, Lou Bunin, who had recently returned from Paris. I infected him with the marionette mania, and we constructed stage and benches, and labored feverishly producing the original *Faust,* the *Crock of Gold, Pierre Patelin,* and a number of children's plays. By summer we were exhausted, and tired of explaining that we weren't just a couple of odd young men playing with dolls, and that our theater was an experiment on a high aesthetic level. There didn't seem to be enough cognoscenti in Chicago to support our project.

At this time, I was at the break-up point of an early love, a neighborhood romance that had endured since my college days. I began to write it out in a little novel called *Frankie and Johnny,* attempting to translate my emotions into a slender city legend of young love. Because I had absorbed the prevailing conviction that you couldn't successfully write about Jews for the American market, I tried to erase what was Jewish in my characters, to present them as a typical couple of young Americans, but the typicality consisted in leaving their backgrounds rather blank.

I placed my Johnny as a clerk at Sears, Roebuck and Co., hopelessly wondering how he could ever get married and support a family. I transposed my couple from the west to the southwest side, oddly enough to the precise district what was later to become identified with James Farrell's work. And I wrote my little romance of hallways and parked cars, with the shock of policemen intruding on the young couple's fumbling necking. The two "drifted apart," as my girl and I had done, with no clear understanding of the forces that had separated them, of their fears and insecurity, which I had nevertheless managed to suggest.

Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* had appeared, and I was influenced by his terse manner of writing. My one desire was that my book be considered American.

*Reporter* was still unpublished, and *Frankie and Johnny* too was rejected. I felt that I had failed, and completely unadjusted in Chicago, I decided to go back to Palestine and try to live in

one of the farm communes, perhaps eventually to write about that life. I left my two manuscripts with an agent, and sailed.

* * *

In Tel Aviv, I was referred to an American woman, Golda Mayerson, who was connected with the labor movement, and the settlements. She had, I learned, been a schoolteacher in Milwaukee, though she was not American born. Golda Mayerson proved to be an understanding, extremely sympathetic woman; as we discussed my half-formed plan she never pressed ideas upon me, but somehow made it easier for my own idea to take form. She arranged for me to meet an energetic, talkative little man named Hartzfeld who spent all of his time traveling between the settlements, when he was not in Jerusalem pleading for tractors for Ain Charod or for a well for Merhavia.

I accompanied Hartzfeld to the settlements. He mulled over the question—where to send me? A typical kibbutz, to write about. Well, each had its peculiarities. In Cfar Giladi I might absorb the tradition of the mountain settlers, the big silent fellows, the shepherds. In Ain Charod I would perhaps be lost, as it was a big kibbutz. Finally he decided on a new settlement near Haifa—Yagur. There I would experience more of the pioneer problems connected with the beginning of a settlement.

Yagur was a little collection of cabins at the base of Mount Carmel, facing the plain of Acre. Two rows of wooden barracks, with a barren yard between, and a larger barrack, the eating hall, at the top of the yard. A few barns and sheds. And there was not a tree or bush in the stony compound. Across the road were the fields.

Hartzfeld turned me over to the secretary, a short, unshaven fellow perpetually chewing sunflower seeds. I had supper, crowded on a bench at the fly-covered table. I hurried, so as to leave my space for someone else, as there were about eighty comrades in



the kibbutz and there wasn't space enough for them all at the tables.

That first night, I slept on a cot in the office—a tiny room in one of the cabins. Later, if I stayed, the secretary remarked with a dubious glint, he would see about finding me a permanent bunk.

There was in my experiment something of another character than I realized. For I was not only a Jew trying to unite himself with the vital historic activity of his people. I was also a city boy learning some of the simplest elements of life through working on a farm.

I was afraid I would appear weak and unworthy amongst these heroic chalutzim, and I was also on edge because of their ironic attitude toward Americans—soft Jews, dilettantes from the land of riches. So I rushed out to toil with an unholy energy, and after the first day of labor I glowed as I ached, for I heard someone remark, "That American is really a hard worker."

The earth there on the banks of the Kishon seemed truly an aged soil, cracked and dry. We were thinning corn, the first days, and I straddled my row, waddling forward in the backbreaking toil, determined to go at least as fast as the girls in the group. Suddenly, overcome by dysentery, I rushed to the ditch. When I returned, they were laughing. The American was not immune. I was human, and accepted.

After dysentery came the days of the barchatch, tiny ephemeral fleas that swarmed around us until the air was a haze; the fleas crept into eyes, nose, ears, and created maddening irritation. We worked through the season of the barchatch. And one day I was entrusted with a plow.

On the other fields, grain was ripening.

There are some things about which we feel ashamed to admit our ignorance. I never knew what bread was. I walked out in the fields one day with an older comrade, chunky Weismann, and he swept a handful of grains from a stem, rolled them between his palms, blew away the chaff, and then inspected the grains in his palm, making remarks of appraisal. I pretended familiarity, but I didn't even know that the kernels were wheat. I never had known how complex and strange is the process of growing wheat

and reaping it and husking the shells from the little grains, nor did I know of the many steps in the complicated process of turning this wheat into bread. As a civilized man, I had not been able to make the tremendous imaginative leap between the waving stalks of grain and baked bread, and I wondered now how people had ever achieved this invention.

The wheat was coming ripe, and the harvest was the great time, Weismann said—that was when the kibbutz really came alive. In the harvest I would really work with them and be one of them.

I had been moved from the office to a room which I shared with three others of the unattached men. One of these was a curly-haired fellow named Yehuda, with abrupt, impatient movements. As he rushed in from the shower and pulled his white after-work blouse over his head, he would mumble and mutter in eternal self-discontent; he had a gesture of clutching at his fingers as though angry with them. Why did they have to get so stiff! After supper he would drag his violin case from under his cot, seize some half-torn sheaf of music, and scuttle out to hunt for a quiet spot where he could practice. If there was no meeting in the chedar ochel he would set to work in a corner of the room while the kitchen crew scrubbed the tables; otherwise he would set up his music in the barn, and sometimes he would climb halfway up the side of Mount Carmel.

The comrades assured me that Yehuda was a talented violinist who could have had a career as a virtuoso. And as we became acquainted, Yehuda Shertok revealed his conflict to me. Should he leave the commune, and go to Europe to study music? Every hand was needed here, in building Palestine. Ah, if he could only be a clod, a simple laborer!

There was the classic conflict between the individual and society, being acted out before me on the neighboring cot. I knew that I should one day write a novel about Yehuda. But in the meantime I had yet to melt into the commune, to come to feel its life entirely.

My few words of Hebrew remembered from childhood lessons in the Jewish People's Institute were of small help. My Yiddish



was better, but I soon sensed that the comrades were reluctant, on principle, to speak Yiddish, jargon, as they called it. A few spoke a halting English, and some French. But the only solution was to learn Hebrew through force of necessity.

Slowly, personalities detached themselves. There was Klimovitzky, the frail, dark-faced bookkeeper, periodically shaken by malarial attacks. He would tell me gloomily of part of his family still in Siberia, where the Russians sent Zionists. I had never known that Zionism was illegal in the Soviet Union, and I was shocked and startled by this fact. Why should the Russians be opposed to Zionism, when we were living here in a pure commune?—Ah, but we are agents of British imperialism, Klimovitzky muttered dourly.

There was Eisen, a red-eyed, hot-tempered fellow continually struggling with his team of mules to haul enough water for the kibbutz from a neighboring well. There was Dvora, a mild little woman who managed the poultry yard, and Fishkin, a good-willed but clumsy lad, a nebach for whom nothing ever went right, and on a Sabbath eve when we danced the hora there was the tall, bony, hawk-faced Yitzhak Loberman, with his straight black hair falling over his eyes, dancing till all others were exhausted.

Most of the members of Yagur were of Russian or Polish origin, but there was also Fritz Lichtenstein, from Holland; he was attempting to cross Holland cattle with Arab stock. And there was another Levin, a little man with blistered lips who liked to discuss Upton Sinclair.

I had adjusted well to the labor, and the roughness of the living conditions did not trouble me, though I disliked the messy fly-ridden table and wondered why the comrades couldn't make an effort to screen the dininghall. I was irked by the lack of privacy in group life, and at the same time experienced a terrible sense of loneliness. Partly, I knew, this was due to my strangeness as an American among these European Jews, but I sensed my own loneliness as scarcely unique, sensed that each one's life was somber and somehow isolated. I believed that many remained in the kibbutz out of self-disciplinary idealism, what they called "vegetarianism"—for indeed there was an inordinate percentage of vegetarians among them, enough to require a special kitchen.

I wondered if in time this sense of imposed loneliness would

disappear, for, after all, they, too, had only been a few years together in this form of life.

* * *

I had been at Yagur only three months when I received a cable from my agent with an offer from the John Day Company for my two books. I was dazed. I would now be established, a real author. I was too restless to stay on in the commune, and I realized that my gesture in coming there had been partly a huffed withdrawal, because of the rejection of my books. Yes, at the first whistle from outside I was ready to drop my pioneering tools, and run.

All my thoughts were in America. I convinced myself that I had to go over *Reporter* before it came out. I promised myself to come back and finish my apprenticeship at Yagur. Then I sailed for New York.

My discoverer was a young editor named Guy Holt who, I proudly learned, had also discovered James Branch Cabell. Holt took me to a basement speakeasy frequented by writers and publishers, and I felt that my life had at last begun.

In going over my manuscript, I decided that it was after all a good thing I had come home as someone had put in a lot of commas. I took them all out again.

But now came that awkward hiatus in the literary life—the months between the acceptance and the appearance of a book. Here I was walking around in the world, with the work that would make me a famous American writer already done and being set up in print. Yet how could anyone know how important I was? How could people know, to invite me to all those literary cocktails and luncheons where young authors displayed their glittering wit? There seemed nothing for it but to return to Chicago, to my job on the *Daily News,* while awaiting fame. I could not get myself as yet to return to Yagur, though I had a sense of guilt at having left the colony with my self-experiment unfinished. As a consequence, I developed, in Chicago, a cross between a Bohemian and a Tel Aviv household.



Opposite one of the city's most romantic landmarks, the Michigan Avenue water tower, I discovered a one-time mansion whose ground floor now housed a Marinello Beauty School. Upstairs was an immense vacant flat, which I proposed to share with a few newspaper friends.

At this time I met a young Palestinian who was working his way through the University of Chicago. Yitzhak Chizik, a husky, tall fellow, boiling over with exuberance, was the first example of the new Palestinian Jew to appear in Chicago. Yitzhak moved into our apartment, and became the chief attraction at our Saturday night parties, when we would drink dago red that Tommy Fizdale obtained in gallon jugs from Little Italy, and we would end up dancing the hora, stomping in a circle until the plaster was shaken loose from the ceiling of the Marinello Beauty School.

Yitzhak paid his rent by teaching me Hebrew. We would sit for an hour every day over a huge Hebrew Bible which we were using as a textbook, but we would wander from the tales of the patriarchs to tales of Yitzhak's family. There were innumerable brothers and sisters, though two of them had already died in the struggle for the homeland. A sister had been killed in the Trumpledor massacre at Tel Hai, and another had died fighting the malarial swamps.

Yitzhak's father was one of the early arrivals in Palestine, having belonged to the Lovers of Zion, whose movement preceded Herzl's. Many among them believed that all of Jewry's ills came from intellectualism, and they were determined to turn themselves into simple agriculturists. Therefore the patriarchal Chizik had forbidden education to his children. They would be peasants, and nothing else.

Yitzhak related to me how his elder brothers and sisters had organized a revolt, plotting for at least one of the family to receive a complete education. The youngest, Yitzhak, was chosen. They planned to spirit him away to the new town of Tel Aviv, where there was a high school. But the father discovered the plot and on the day they were to set forth, he removed the wheels from the wagons.

Nevertheless, here was Yitzhak at the University of Chicago.

As a soon-to-be-recognized novelist, I decided that the only fit newspaper job for me now was that of a columnist, and I haunted Henry Smith with importunings. Finally I began to write sample columns which I would leave on his desk, and they began to find their way into the paper. These pieces were mostly street sketches or reflections about the arts. The column took form under the heading *A Young Man's Fancy,* which the staff promptly paraphrased as *A Fancy Young Man.*

I was so grateful at being permitted to write a column that I never thought of asking to be paid for it, and continued to cover my assignments like any other reporter.

I had begun work on another book. It was a strange, dreamlike little novel called *He, Israel,* formed out of all my confused and intuitive reactions to my first European trip, and my first encounter with the mystical elements in religion. The pattern of the novel expressed my compulsion to trace, in reverse, the route of my forebears, to go back to Poland and to Palestine.

The hero was a young American Jew shocked into self-awareness through realizing the distance between himself and his gentile upper-class sweetheart. He set off, then, on a voyage of self-discovery. He wandered through Europe, backward through Christianity and Judaism, and he made the journey at last to his family's home village in Poland. (This I had not myself done. But Eddie Robbin had returned as far as his family's source in Czecho-Slovakia, and through Eddie's description of his reception in a tiny village inn kept by one of his uncles I tried to imagine what I would have felt in Poland.) Ever homeless, my hero wandered at last to Palestine.

Now the story became quite pretentiously mystical. I drew upon legends of the coming of the Messiah—how he would battle with antichrist before the Sealed Gate in the wall of Jerusalem, and overcome the adversary, entering the city through a breach in the gate. I conceived this as a subjective battle, with Messiah and antichrist as one being, the good and evil in man. But in order to link reality with the fulfillment of mystic prophecy, I identified the Jewish people itself as Messiah, and the return of the Jews to Eretz Israel, in a movement that carried with it the highest ideals of social justice, as the completion of all that had been symbolized in the figure of the personal Messiah; I invented a battle with the Arabs for



Jerusalem, which took place at the ancient wall and was curiously like the actual battle that was to take place twenty years later when the Arab Legion entered Jerusalem through St. Stephen's Gate.

This dreamlike little novel was never published. It was often mawkish through my incomplete assimilation of my personal experiences, and it was often highly mannered in its effort to disguise self-consciousness.

But there I was, a smart-aleck reporter in the city news room, completing my mystical novel, secretly imagining myself to be one of the brightest particles in the Messiah which was composed of all humanity.

On the day I finished writing *He, Israel,* I was provided with one of those whimsical demonstrations of the gap between the life in the mind and the reality of mundane existence, that only the city can invent. As the editor summoned me for an assignment, I slipped the manuscript into my desk. The city editor desired me to interview a flagpole sitter.

"You mean, go up on top of the flagpole?"

The city editor grunted; his nose was full red, explaining his inventive mood.

At least, I reflected, my great work was safely completed. They would find it in my desk after I had tumbled from the highest point in Chicago, and my boss would have the untimely end of America's most promising writer eternally on his conscience.

The flagpole-sitting craze was at is zenith, and the current sitter was seeking the championship atop the pole atop the Morrison Hotel.

On the skyscraper roof, I met the sitter's entourage of managers and sandwich expediters. It was decided to tie me into a bosun's chair, which is nothing but a backless swing. I was given a pack of cigarettes to deliver to the sitter, and presently they began to hoist me aloft. I'd got about twenty feet up when I became entangled with the umbrella-like ribs of a huge reflector on the pole. The haulers gave a terrific yank which tore my pants and tore me loose from the reflector. It also tore loose my rope harness. The bosun's chair rode up my back while the

harness all but slipped over my head. I caught the rope, holding on with both hands; if I let go, I would drop.

The trainers, unaware, continued to haul me upward; with each pull, the seat worked itself further up my back, and the weight on my wrists increased. Now I was high enough to feel the swaying of the pole. I no longer dared look downward. The pole had narrowed so that I could clasp my legs around it. I tilted my head to the sky, but once or twice forced myself to take a quick roundabout glance so that I could describe Chicago as seen by the flagpole sitter.

The narrowing pole swayed like a stalk of grain. The sitter was crouched on a little platform, watching my approach. I had no sooner reached his level than he yelled, "You're tied in wrong!" He began making frantic signs to those below.

"I've got some cigarettes for you," I said, "but I can't leave go the rope to get at them."

"You're tied in wrong, go back down!" He had a telephone rigged there, and tried to communicate with his assistants on the roof, but the phone failed to work. He shouted down to them. No use. Meanwhile, having reached my goal, I made an earnest attempt to conduct my interview, inquiring about the utility of flagpole sitting, the reflections of a sitter, and his general philosophy. The sitter yanked the telephone loose and hurled it down to the roof.

His assistants must then have realized that something had gone amiss, for they began to lower me.

The trainers had apparently concluded that I had fainted, for two of them were waiting with pails of water. I didn't have a chance. As soon as I was within reach they flattened me on the roof and doused me.

The next day a girl reporter from Hearst's *Evening American* was hauled up in a laundry basket. Her interview appeared on a two-page spread, with pictures. "Some guy from the *News* tried to come up yesterday," said the perfidious flagpole sitter, who was being paid by our rival paper, "but he fainted."

All I got out of the incident was a permanent vertigo, and a new pair of pants. But when I took *He, Israel* out of my drawer I felt I had indeed been brought down to earth. It seemed everywhere juvenile; I didn't submit it to my publisher.



At last *Reporter* appeared. By now I had developed stage fright. It seemed to me that the book was immature, and that its unusual method would be seen as nothing but a stunt. Though it read well, and gave a highly vivid impression of Chicago, I feared there was more truth than cleverness in my forenote, "I have nothing to say."

The reviews began to come in. Then I experienced the emptiness that comes to practically all writers, with publication. The reviews, even if lengthy, say so little. Newspaper reviews as a rule merely outline a book's content, with a favorable or unfavorable sentence at the close. Often, such reviews are simply derived from the dust-jacket material.

The few serious critics of that time seemed to devote all their attention to a constant telling of the beads, Joyce, Stein, Hemingway; it was impossible for a beginner to find out where he stood, how he should continue, unless he concluded through being ignored that he was simply worthless. And it was this depressing feeling that influenced a decision I had soon to make.

A few weeks after *Reporter* appeared, I received a letter from Guy Holt about a threatened libel suit. I could not imagine whom I had libeled. But there was, as a very minor character, a typically fussy, frippy newspaperwoman, an elderly sobsister who was always dropping pencils, losing bits of paper out of her handbag, and ruining group interviews with "women's interest" questions. Actually this character was a composite of several women working on Chicago papers at the time; I had even discovered to my horror that June Provines, a lovely girl on the *News,* for whom I had had a secret crush since I was a fifteen-year-old cub, believed she was the model.

But now a woman on the staff of the *Chicago Evening American* claimed she could be identified, as I had paraphrased a news item she had written, attaching it to my character. She demanded that *Reporter* be withdrawn.

It was just that week when all the flaws and shortcomings of the novel seemed to stand out, glaring and ghastly. The woman's attack momentarily appeared to me as a heaven-sent opportunity. I would surely write much worthier material. I agreed to withdraw *Reporter.*

In the years since, I've wondered about this matter, not that

the book was important in a literary sense, but I wondered why the publishers consented to suppression, since the book was not doing badly, and some simple solution could have been found, such as the elimination of the offending passages. I wondered whether there were other objections I hadn't known about. *Reporter* contained a realistic description of an American Legion convention—up to then these blowouts had been treated with dignity—and I thought perhaps the publisher had been a little embarrassed, and found the woman's complaint handy.

As for myself, I had no realization then that I should have fought on principle for my freedom of expression. *Reporter* was withdrawn without explanation. The following week I received a wire from Harry Hansen, who had moved to the *New York World.* Did I want to say anything about the withdrawal of my first novel? My reply was a sad bit of masochism. I referred him to the flyleaf quotation, "I have nothing to say."

Now, nothing of the Jewish question appeared in relation to this whole incident, and it may seem that this question appears constantly enough, without my seeking for it when it doesn't show. But my behavior in this matter was characteristic of a person frightened and unsure of his place in the world, uncertain really as to what taboo he has violated. It is curious that I didn't ask anyone's advice about *Reporter,* but behaved rather as an outsider who comes into someone's house, makes a *faux pas,* and hastily retreats in shame. This unsteadiness had roots in my childhood sense of unbelongingness. I had nothing to say because I was afraid that if I talked I would reveal myself as a kid from the Bloody Nineteenth ward, as a sheenie, a punk who had distressed a nice middle-aged gentile woman, as someone who was ashamed of his parents for not teaching him how to behave, because they didn't themselves know how to behave in this American world. The same pattern might have been exhibited by an Italian kid from the Bloody Nineteenth ward, or by any young non-Jewish writer with deep inner uncertainties. But mine came from there.

And it was significant that I reacted at once by deciding to return to Yagur. Partly I had a sense of having left something unfinished there, and partly a feeling of doing penance, but undoubtedly too I hoped to find something good, and positive for myself.



In New York, I stopped to talk with Guy Holt. In my swinging back and forth between Palestine and America, I was by no means giving up my American identity. *Frankie and Johnny* would be coming out in a few months. Over some Old Fashioneds in his favorite basement, I tried to explain my feelings about the little novel as a "purely American" story about a couple of city kids, taken at the most common level, just any two American youngsters, necking and drifting apart, helplessly confused. Couldn't the book be brought out in some way so that it would reach ordinary people, I begged—the Frankies and Johnnys who don't usually buy books? Couldn't books be put in paper covers as in Europe, so that shopgirls and clerks could afford them?

What I was trying to express was the modern writer's despairing sense of a wall between himself and his public. But there was more in my hunger for this particular book to have a wide audience. Perhaps there was a fear in me that this time by going to Palestine I would lose America, and I wanted to leave behind me something that would call me back; a wide public acceptance of *Frankie and Johnny* would assure me that my writing was in the American stream.

Further, the story itself was a reconstitution of my own early love affair, and I wanted surely to feel through the warm reaction of a mass audience that my girl and I, though Jews, were just like any other Americans, just another Frankie and Johnny.

Holt got me off the subject by talking about my future work. I was going back to Palestine. I would do a novel there. And after that?

I realized that I had no plan, because within me so much depended on the Palestine experience itself.

* * *

Now when I returned to Yagur I was accepted on a different footing; I had indeed come back; I was a comrade.

On Sabbaths I took long walks, most often with a young man named Baruch who had passed some time studying social sciences at the university in Jerusalem. Often we discussed whether I would remain in Palestine and build a new life for myself. It was not really that I believed I had been defeated in my American life; but what drew me here was the seductive appeal of unity in one's life. Here, all could be harmonized, if I would regard my being American as an accident of birth, correctible at will.

But could one speak of achieving unity in one's life if one began by amputation? For my separation from American culture would be an amputation. Wasn't it a rigid idea that a Jew should live only in an all-Jewish society, an Italian in an all-Italian society, etc.? This conflict touched on the basic issues which were to flower in our time, and could not be satisfactorily solved by an act of will. I do not believe that I have entirely resolved the conflict as yet, but in these twenty years I have gathered and lived through a great deal of evidence on this question, and I hope that it will be of some use here in clarifying the perplexing relationships of nationalism, hereditary culture, international idealism in the man of our day.

Here in Palestine—even before the Jewish community was a nation—I could live as a Jew in a Jewish society, speaking our own tongue, raising wholly Jewish children. I would myself be an immigrant, as my parents had been immigrants in America, and as their forebears had been in Poland. But my sacrifice—and I thought of it as a sacrifice—would be the final price to be paid, the circle would be closed at last, and thereafter adjustment would be complete. The logic of Jewish life in Palestine was to me irrefutable. Therefore the question stood before me: if you believe in it, why don't you do it?

But I didn't know in what way I believed in this life. If someone asked, "are you a Zionist?" I didn't feel free to answer in the affirmative. To begin with, the term implied political adherence, and though I was in full sympathy with the movement, I wasn't a political Zionist, somewhat as I was no communist though I was in sympathy with the goal of an eventual classless society. I was afraid of political conformations, while at the same time feeling myself an inadequate citizen somehow shirking my duties through refraining from political action. At



other times I told myself I had to retain my freedom from political adherence because I was a writer who needed objectivity. Or, I convinced myself that there was no organized group whose views coincided precisely with mine. At bottom, I wished for the eventual creation of a political Jewish entity in Palestine but I didn't quite dare hope that this could come to pass, and wanted to keep my own way open for adherence to the thought that even a cultural entity such as we were achieving could suffice. Faint-hearted, I couldn't put myself wholly into a cause that might fail.

At times I thought my problem would be easier if I weren't a writer, for how could I, full grown, learn to write in another tongue—Hebrew? And more, I felt that as an American I had a double adjustment to make, to the European Jews of Palestine. I wondered if I might adjust myself in Eretz Israel through living with an American group, and Eddie Robbin and I discussed forming such a kibbutz. Then we asked ourselves whether we believed Americans should come, even though they had no need of Palestine as a land of refuge, and did we believe that all Jews should eventually come to Palestine? My answer was no. I believed that some American Jews—those who were most sensitive to their Hebrew selves—should share in the building of the new Hebrew culture, and that this culture would then have to be carried back to enrich the lives of the Jews remaining outside Eretz Israel. Already, there was much that had been created of a positive value, and that was unknown to the great body of American Jewry as well as to the world. I felt then that my function would be to make that contact, to bring out to the world what was being done here. A novel about kibbutz life would be a first project in this direction. For the time being at least I would put aside my personal perplexities and work on this project.

Purely from the point of view of form, I was pleased with the subject, as a kibbutz was a self-contained entity, convenient for study by a novelist. Once, walking across the fields with Baruch, I made some such remark about a kibbutz being an excellent place to study life; he replied just as portentously, "Here we don't study life. We live."

I felt deservedly reproved. But could a writer ever simply live?

The harvest came, and we were about one-third of the entire kibbutz in the harvest team, and indeed as Weismann had said we felt an exhilarating unity in labor, from those who pitched the bundles of wheat onto the thresher to those who stood sweating, half naked, in the exhaust of the machine pitching away the chaff.

We ate enormously in the field, and as we devoured our own bread we felt as though our energy had returned directly to us, through the fruit of our harvest labor.

Our fields were crossed by a donkey trail, and the comrades were constantly on the watch for Arabs who made a habit of slipping sheaves of grain under their voluminous garments, as they passed. At night, neighboring villagers might try to make more serious depradations. During the harvest season a doubled guard circled the fields, while reinforcements slept on top of the threshing machines. In my turn, I spent a night there.

As we sat on the platform of the antiquated thresher, I absorbed many tales of Arab troubles, and came to understand that a chief source of conflict lay in this constant pilfering. From the earliest days the settlements had had to mount guards to protect their grain and livestock; the worst trouble came from the Bedouin, the nomad Arabs who camped about in their black tents, and with whom theft was a traditional art, admired by the community.

There in the field the Arab problem had an altogether different aspect than it had in formal discussions, and than it afterward attained in international political forums. The comparison of the Palestinian Arab problem with the American Indian problem has always been avoided with the thought that it would give offense to the more cultivated Arabs. Yet the viewpoint of the settler was most easily understood through this comparison. For like the early American settlers, the Zionists were pioneers in areas sparsely inhabited by a people who lived at a primitive and often savage level. There were Arab villagers who resented the Zionist intrusion with the simple resentment of primitives against strangers who possessed mysterious machines and book powers—magic. And though trading relationships were



soon enough established, the comparative wealth of the Jewish colonists remained a continuous temptation to the Arabs.

While pilfering by neighboring villagers could be fairly well prevented, through constant vigilance and through cultivation of relations with the villagers, the thieving impulse was only checkmated rather than erased. But nomadic Bedouin coming seasonally to squat near a colony might organize raids and involve local Arab villagers. Punishing expeditions necessarily followed; feuds developed. Occasionally there were Arab troubles that brewed up into full-scale attacks on settlements. Or, in some areas, the troubles took the form of ambush, Indian style, so that for long periods the settlers felt unsafe on the roads. There were horrible tales of atrocities reminiscent of Indian savagery, tales of men waylaid and murdered and found later with their genitals in their mouths.

Little of this at the time was considered as coming from political motives in the assailants themselves. Indeed, the Arab peasant, the fellah, had no conception of politics. The Arabs had had no political life within their folk memory, for they had been governed by the Turks for generations, and now were governed by the English. Palestine had been a poor place to live, the inhabitants were ridden with malaria and trachoma, indolent, feeble, half blind, living in hovels as serfs to absentee owners.

Political incitement had been added by the Mufti and his clan.

Who was the Mufti, I asked of my comrades on the threshing machine, for though I had often heard the name, I had accepted it as a kind of devil-name, without enquiry.

"That's their high priest in Jerusalem. He's a Husseini," explained Bialystocker.

"What's a Husseini?"

"The Husseini family." I then had explained to me the background which has since been explained in many books but which seems never to have been widely grasped by the western mind. For these matters seem much more real when one lies guarding one's grain, and the Arab village is a cluster of huts across the field. This seems real when one has seen the villagers threshing their grain by having camels or donkeys

tread it out on the ground. All this as far as Palestine is concerned has passed into history, but the Middle East still lives in this fashion, ruled by aggregations of important land-owning families, such as the Husseinis, the Nashashibis, the Khaldis in Palestine. These families own villages, and the village fellaheen, through constant debt, are in the position of serfs. The fellaheen are controlled not only through debt but through religious fear, and the high Moslem priests are often of the same controlling families.

In Palestine, the family to which the Grand Mufti belonged was consequently in a position of great power, and the current Mufti was a Husseini.

"You mean, their priests enter politics?" I asked.

He eyed me with a glint of pity. "That's why the English made this priest the Mufti. They wanted a strong politician to hold against us, and Husseini was already leading riots in Jaffa in 1921."

"He wasn't always Mufti?" I repeated stupidly.

"No. The Grand Mufti died a few years ago and the place was vacant. This Husseini was a young man, and according to their rules he wasn't even eligible for the job, there were several in line before him. But the Husseinis made a deal and put him in, and the English, even though they knew his program was to make trouble, approved the deal."

"Why?"

"Why? To have a whip against us. The English that are here don't like us."

"And how can he make trouble by being Mufti?"

Patiently, he explained. "Do you think the fellah is going to bother us just because a young Husseini makes nationalistic speeches? All the fellah knows is that since we are here things are a little better for him. But if the Grand Mufti in the mosque tells him to take his knife and kill the unbeliever and the infidel, and that he will be rewarded by having a few extra wives in heaven—then, if he also thinks he can steal a horse or a sheep while he is about it, then he will make trouble."

But one question remained—Why was the Mufti against us?

Partly indeed out of fanatical nationalism, out of hatred for the strangers in the land, the infidel Jews. But there was another answer. The Mufti was a member of a feudal family;



the advent of the Jews threatened their way of life. Alongside the modern Jew, some of the fellaheen became restless; they saw that other people lived differently, kept the fruit of their labor instead of turning most of it over to an effendi. The fellaheen also discovered that they could work for wages, since many of the early Jewish settlers employed Arab labor. And they saw modern machinery. The fellaheen were awakening, and in the end such an awakening would weaken the power of the leading feudal families. It was the old old story of progress and reaction, here long delayed.

All this complex movement was going on, and in our own settlement I could see very clearly how things happened. Next to us was an Arab village, Wallad El Sheikh, and there were the fellaheen living in mud hovels. Most of the land around us lay untouched, untilled, a pestilential swamp, though it had in its time been the fertile bay of Acre.

Their cattle were stunted, bony. Their children had running eye sores. The Arabs who came to the colony for little trades were naive and full of guile. The settlers joked about them indulgently, as the whites must have joked about the Indians during the intervals of peaceful trading. Certainly it was not the fault of the fellaheen that they were illiterate, dirty, indolent; all this was the end result of a vicious protracted feudalism. There were idealists among the colonists who contended that we had to elevate the living standard of the Arabs. But the general feeling was one of tolerant and patronizing contempt, which turned to irritation when there were thefts, and into violent hatred when there were attacks.

In our day-to-day relationships, these same poor fellaheen were simply considered as thieves, and we had to be constantly on the watch against them, thus wasting a considerable part of our man power. When we caught them we had to punish them, for it was futile to take them to court. Thieving and lying were, to the Arab, natural defenses in life; a clever thief was applauded, and a lie was easier to speak than the truth, and more interesting. It is difficult for Americans and Europeans to understand that the Arabs do not live by our accepted ethical values, and indeed these ethical divergencies were later to create some confusion on an international political level. This is said not so much in criticism of a people's ethics as to explain why so

many misunderstandings came about in dealing with the Arabs. Deceit in the form of guile is in their folk culture, just as it is in the Hebrew folk culture of biblical times. The fellah is simply not aware that different standards of behavior exist. Therefore the best that the settlers could do in day-to-day life was to view their neighbors as rascally naughty primitives who had to be eternally watched, and directly punished for their wrongs.

There had been days of increasing irritation as grain was packed off from the fields, and it was after a series of such thefts that a little incident took place among the threshers. An Arab, coming along the donkeypath while we were at the noon meal, asked for water. One of the boys pointed to a barrel. The Arab drank. Several of the settlers smiled to each other. It was the water for horses.

The incident was understandable in the circumstances, and I used it later in my novel, as one of a mounting series of encounters, for it seemed ridiculous to present the Jews as angelic in the conflict. The use of the incident was to be much resented.

We had completed the harvest. In the evenings, we talked almost idly of the World Zionist Congress that was taking place in Switzerland. All that speech-making about establishing Zion seemed unreal, for we were living in it. One of the comrades, who could read Arabic, amused us with quotations from the Arab press about the congress. It was presented as the world conclave in which the Jews plotted to rule all mankind.

But there was uneasiness in the land.

One night a stack of grain on the field of a family of Cfar Chassidim, a village across the plain, caught fire. We all labored to put out the blaze. Some said that passing Bedouin had set the fire.

And then came the ghastly, unbelievable story of Hebron. The Arabs had run amok, slaughtering scores of Jews in the ancient community, mutilating their bodies.

This was the beginning of the massacres of 1929. The account came to us in confused snatches, on the radio, in the press. Two points were significant: the massacres had not taken place in a new settlement area but in a pre-Zionist school of the Torah in a region where, for generations, Jews and Arabs had lived in peace.

Secondly, the incitement to the massacre had been of a religious nature. In the mosques the Arabs had been told that the Jews, meeting in Europe, had put up gold to buy the Mosque of Omar, and that they were going to take it over! Urged into a frenzy, the faithful Moslems whipped out their knives and fell upon the nearest Jews—the bearded Talmudists, and their students.



The Hebron massacres, incited by the Mufti's agents, were the signal for attacks on Jews throughout the country. Already, there were reports that the British police in Hebron had reacted slowly, controlling the situation after the Jews were slashed to death—a technique that was to become characteristic.

That night in Yagur the guard was tripled. We were warned that there might be sniping from behind the rocks of Mount Carmel, and advised to wear dark clothes so as not to make targets of ourselves.

Our flimsy wooden cottages seemed all too vulnerable, should there be an organized attack. In the entire colony, there was only one concrete structure, the newly built granary.

Early the next day a car arrived from Haifa, and we were all assembled in the granary for instruction in self-defense. I had of course heard the word Haganah, and knew that there was a semisecret defense organization, a home guard which had grown out of an early association of settlement watchmen. The Haganah instructor had only one pistol to leave with us; it was passed from hand to hand while he explained its operation. Then he rushed off to Ain Charod.

We had a few more pistols and a half-dozen rifles in the colony. It was decided to bring all the children into the granary for safety. Benari, the head of the defense committee, now assigned us our guard positions. Mine was in front of a toolshed. I picked up a piece of iron pipe, wondering whether it would be a better weapon than a pitchfork. I recalled the tales of mutilations practiced by the Arabs.

In mid-afternoon one of our mounted sentries clattered into the yard, reporting a band of Arabs on the road. We took our positions, and waited. Presently we saw them—some thirty or forty, gesticulating menacingly. But they passed the gate, and continued along the road.

That night I was asked if I could help out in a little problem. Benari's wife was seriously ill, and had to be taken to a hospital

in Haifa. We would try to move her by truck to the nearest British police post, which was at the Nesher cement factory about halfway to Haifa. From there it was hoped that the British would give us protection. I could help, as an interpreter to the British.

The sick woman, one of the most attractive girls in the colony, lay pale and motionless on a stretcher. No one said what was wrong with her, so I assumed it was some female disorder. We rested her stretcher on the floor of the truck; the girl writhed and moaned as it bounced over the stony yard.

She was Benari's wife, and he and two comrades squatted in the rear of the truck with me. Between Yagur and the police post at the factory was the hillside Arab village. As we sped past it I heard some sharp sounds, as of stones striking stones. When we were well past, Benari cursed. Only then, I realized we had been shot at.

Often when we are intensely keyed we miss the very happenings for which we are on watch. Years later, in the war, I went on a mission in the nose of a fighter-bomber; inside Germany, our planes dove in echelon over a line of freight cars. The cars, laden with ammunition, burst aflame. My pilot dove in his turn, and as we spiraled up again I heard him swearing bitterly. It wasn't until we returned to base that I realized that the plane directly before ours had dived too low and been sucked into the flames. It had vanished before my eyes without my realizing what had happened. So now, I didn't recognize the noises as we passed. It was the first time I had been shot at.

We drove into the factory yard. The British police were in a shack near the gate. They received us angrily. Didn't we know the road was closed? Where the devil had we come from? What the devil did we want?

I explained that we had a very sick woman in the truck, who urgently needed to be taken to Haifa.

The trooper telephoned Haifa. Some frigging Jews here say they've got a sick woman has to be brought into hospital... Aw you know the friggers, anything to give you trouble. Right, I'll have a look at her.

It was my first contact with the British. I was shocked, puzzled, and pained, as when one discovers that a friend is no friend at all. Until then I had not taken very seriously the settlers'



resentment of the British. We were a hypersensitive hypercritical people. Perhaps some Britishers were intriguing against us, but after all, the world of nations had put them here to help us, they could not sabotage such a trust. And why should the individual soldier dislike us? It was to be many years before I understood.

Benari's wife was finally transferred to a police car. He was permitted to remain with her. The rest of us headed back for Yagur. This time we lay flat on the bottom of the truck as we raced past Wallad El Sheikh.

For two days the road was closed. Then a few essential vehicles got through. Benari returned from Haifa; his wife was out of danger. He brought along the mail, and there was a cable from the *Chicago Daily News* for me to cover the disorders.

I was technically on leave of absence from the *News*. When the first word of the Hebron massacres had come, I had of course felt the newsman's urge to go and cover the catastrophe. But at the same time, I realized that the community in which I had been living was in danger, and though I was no trained fighter, I was still a unit, a man in the group. It seemed to me that I could not go away at that moment to exercise my function as an American newspaperman.

Even before the arrival of the cable I had puzzled over my dilemma. But when my utility was proven in my small service as translator, I felt I ought to stay where I was.

There was still another factor. I was here perhaps not so much as a participant in this life but as one who wished to write about it, to communicate the story of Jewish settlement to the world in a more serious form than that of news dispatches. Toward such an end, I had been absorbing the daily life of the kibbutz, and surely the richest part of the experience was this time of threat to the community. I couldn't abandon this intimate experience to take the surface view of events afforded to a news correspondent. I had to decide, then, whether I was a novelist or a newspaperman.

By the time the cable arrived, our own situation at Yagur had relaxed. I asked the secretary of the kibbutz whether I should go. He agreed that I should leave with the produce truck.

In Haifa, I was taken to Haganah headquarters where I received probably the first interview ever given by a Haganah commander. It was a bitter warning that the talmudists in the ancient community of Safed, comparable to the Hebron commu-

nity, might still be attacked. The British, he charged, had refused to send protection to the isolated Jews of Safed and had thwarted the Haganah's efforts to reinforce the community. I dispatched the story with a courier who was leaving for Beirut. The massacre of the Jews in Safed took place the next day.

I had gone up to Jerusalem to continue coverage, and was standing in the post office line to file my story when I recognized something familiar about the large back of the man preceding me. I peered around for a look at his face; it was John Gunther, flown in from Paris while the *News* waited for a response from me. Gunther's presence released me from "objective" coverage, and I felt relieved.

It was not until *Personal History* appeared some time later that I learned of another newspaperman who had experienced a moral reaction parallel to my own, except on the other side. Vincent Sheean had found himself in Jerusalem when the massacres began. He too reached his crisis between "objective" reporting and impassioned participation in 1929, in Palestine.

He had come there for a look at Zionism. An arrogant remark about the Arabs, made by a Jewish girl, had turned him sour on us and directed his sympathy toward the under-underdog in the situation, the Arab fellah. Of course his previous adventures in the Riff war had predisposed him toward Arab nationalism.

It seemed to the Jews that if he wanted to help the fellah he should have attacked the Arab effendi, rather than the Zionists, for it was the effendi who had reduced their people to a state of drugged indifference and diseased ignorance, and it was the effendi rather than the Jew who would keep the Arab in serfdom. Certainly there were arrogant and stupid Jews who didn't hesitate to exhibit contempt for the fellah, but that was not our dominant view, nor was it the greatest injustice in the Palestine situation.

But there is no point in opening a post mortem argument with Sheean. No one is ever convinced in these disputes, and the reasons on both sides are well known by now. In both our cases, the crisis served to underline the difficulties of the conscientious writer in practicing objective journalism. I belive that since then the world has come to recognize that the nonpartisan newspaperman is largely a myth, and we have come also to



respect the journalist who presents his passion and his partisanship, so that his bias may be subtracted, if necessary. He is surely to be preferred to the journalist who disguises his feelings while manipulating the cold-seeming news to support his inner view.

The massacres, begun through exhortations in the mosques, developed into attacks by bands of looters upon isolated settlements. One of the most heroic defences was in the colony of Hulda. The leader of the defense was a brother of Yitzhak Chizik; Ephraim Chizik was killed.

Yitzhak, then studying under Harold Laski at the London School of Economics, rushed home to Palestine. We went out together to the wrecked colony, and stood outside the central defense post, on the spot where his brother had fallen, hit by a sniper's bullet as he went to relieve an outpost.

Yitzhak could not rid himself of a feeling of guilt. For it seemed to him that it was now his duty to give up his studies and remain in Palestine to take his brother's place as a worker in a kibbutz, as an arm in the Haganah. We talked about this long and earnestly. Yitzhak knew in his mind that he could be of greater use to his people later on, through completing his education.

Though an attempt had been made to keep the news of Ephraim's death from his mother, the aged woman found out that the third of her children had died in the struggle for Palestine; she did not survive. The father then came to the home of the eldest son, in Herzlia, to sit in mourning.

I went with Yitzhak to the home of his brother Baruch in Hertzlia. This brother was an orange-grove supervisor, but spent every penny he earned for the publication of a Hebrew encyclopaedia of Palestine flora. He had wandered all over the land collecting specimen of obscurely known plants, which he identified with plants mentioned in scriptures. This was his passion.

There in Baruch's house an aged Jew, slight and hard as a stunted olive tree, sat in mourning. His beard was of stiff gray hairs, his stubborn bones showed through his spare flesh. This was the patriarch who had given his sons and daughters to the

land of Israel. This was the man who had revolted against intellectuality, wanting his children to be peasants. And it was now he, together with his eldest son, who persuaded Yitzhak to return to his studies.

I went to Tel Aviv to start writing my novel about Yagur. The story of Yehuda's conflict between his life as a musician and as a pioneer was of course my story, and apart from the special pleading for individual realization in the case of the creative artist, it was the story of the conflict in all of us between selfish and group interests. My story ended with Yehuda's decision to remain in the commune and keep his music only for his comrades. I saw this as a sacrifice—again, I suppose because I felt I should have done something of the sort myself. Some years later I was to understand a good deal more about this basic problem, through the further development of Yehuda's case.

I had rented a little house on Hayarkon, along the seashore, and the time of writing was pleasant. Between drafts, I went up to Jerusalem where an enquiry commission on the massacres was in session. I covered it for Gershon Agronsky. Through the coming years I was to hear the same arguments, facts, and distortions before one commission after another. And this time too, nothing came of the enquiry; the dead were dead.

I sent off my book to John Day. While waiting for the publisher's reaction, I looked for a place for myself in Palestine; I had in mind that I could arrange my life between Palestine and America, and like everyone in Eretz Israel at the time, I thought an orange grove would be the answer to all my material problems. I would have to support it from America for six years, but then it would support me as a writer.

Halfway between Tel Aviv and Haifa, on the coast, a new settlement called Nathanyah was being opened up by a stout and glib young Palestinian named Oved Ben Ami. It was to be a co-operative village with a nucleus of Palestine-born sabras. We drove out one day to the site; beyond Herzlia there was no road, so we pushed the car through sand drifts, forded a rivulet, and came out at last upon a height above the sea. The area was a



wasteland relieved by a few melon patches. Some distance back was an Arab village, flanked by the sheikh's orange grove. And far back were the hills rising to Jerusalem. The view was open from Mount Hermon, vague in the north, to Jaffa. The place seemed like home to me.

The colony of Nathanyah then consisted of two tents and a shack. Irrigation wells had not yet been started, but water could be rented from the sheikh. I decided to plant my grove at once, and labored there during the following weeks, until my seedlings stood in their rows.

Meanwhile I received my reply from Richard Walsh, of John Day. *Yehuda* was a beautiful book and he would be glad to publish it, only there was a detail at the very end of the story, a touch that he felt inconsistent with my central character. Would I consider changing it?

The touch—literally a touch—happened to be final accent of my tale. As so often occurs, the home-driving, culminating point, being outstanding, seemed out of place. Certainly if one element in a work stands out unsupported, if the rest of the work does not lead up to it and integrate with it, then the work is badly made. But whose judgement is to be trusted? While he is most anxious and sensitive for outside reaction, the artist clings to the inner knowledge that in the last analysis it is his own personality that is being expressed, not the personality of his publisher or his proofreader or his wife. Sometimes a critical suggestion before the issuance of a work does reveal a distortion, an omission, an overemphasis. Often, repeated test reactions prove to an artist that he has not accomplished his intention, that he has not communicated his meaning. Then, many writers and painters and composers gratefully reconsider, and make changes in their work. But in the case in question it became clear that we were at odds over a matter of taste. Was my work to represent my publisher's taste or my own? If I was a crude fellow, should I attempt to disguise it, in my work?

And the point in question was actually the origin-point though it came at the end of the story. It was an incident Yehuda had told me about himself; out of that incident the novel had taken form.

The story was this: A world-famous violinist, touring the Middle East, visited the Zionist settlements. On the slope of

Mount Carmel, just above Yagur, he gave a concert for the colonists of the area.

It was planned that Yehuda should perform for the virtuoso, who would then decide whether Yehuda should leave the settlement to develop his talent. But when the celebrity appeared at Yagur, Yehuda had a peculiar reaction to him as a person. The virtuoso was something of a dandy, over-polite, impatient, nervous; he couldn't bear the flies, the dust, the crude manners of the chavarim, the very earth of life. Even though the man was a great artist, Yehuda decided that he did not want to risk becoming such a person.

As the virtuoso was about to leave the colony, it was recalled that Yehuda was to play for him. Irritated but indulgent, the virtuoso ordered his limousine to wait so that the audition might take place. But Yehuda, standing beside the car, changed his mind. "I only play for my comrades," he said, and flecked a speck of dust off the virtuoso's coat.

It was this speck of dust that became the point of contention. My publisher thought the gesture crude, antipathetic; he felt it detracted from the nobility of my hero. But for me, the gesture was the ultimate touch, emphasizing the intolerance that was part of his nobility, the tinge of moral superiority that was yet understandable and forgivable. It was a gesture that told, all in one, of the rawness, the frailty, the lack of manners, and the strict sense of human value in the new Jews of Palestine.

I attempted to explain this by letter, and got into quite a dispute with my publisher. Finally I declared he probably couldn't see my point because he was "too much of a gentleman." This was apparently an unforgivable accusation, for my publisher cabled suggesting that we break off relations. I had never realized one could lose a publisher by calling him a gentleman. I rather admired his nicety and felt that, if anything, it proved he was really a—what I called him.

* * *

With the completion of *Yehuda* and the planting of my grove I had quieted, for the time being, my sense of obligation to my



Jewish self. Now I had to find another publisher, and get a job to support my orange grove. On my way, I stopped in Paris, and one evening at Marek Szwarc's I was fascinated by his recitation of a number of tales about the wonder-rabbis of a sect called the Chassidim. I had never heard of them. He gave me a pile of Yiddish penny storybooks that had been lying about his studio, collected once in Poland. They contained tales of the founder of the Chassidic sect, the Baal Shem Tov—the Master of the Name.

These stories sang right home to me. I discovered a whole literature of parables and miracles, of ethical fables grown out of a remote Jewish village life in the Carpathians.

Chassidism was a folk-movement, a renewal from below of faith in life itself. It taught the immanence of God in all creation, animate and inanimate, it taught worship through joy, taught that a tune whistled from a pure heart was more perfect than a memorized prayer, that song, dance, and love were instruments of worship. It seemed to me that this was the first pure flowing of the Jewish folk stream since the compilation of the Talmud.

I decided to do a book of Chassidic tales. In a Paris library I found a full collection of these Yiddish booklets, edited by the Jewish Folklore Institute of Vilna, the city of my parents' origin. And as I pored over this material it seemed to me that my affinity for Chassidic legendry was a mental heritage transcending space and environment. Had my parents never come to America, had I been born there in a village close to Vilna, I might have become a Chassid with my earcurls brushing my cheeks as I worked over these very tales in the folklore institute of that city.

I found a rich development in form as the tales spanned a dynasty of wonder-rabbis from the Baal Shem to his grandson, Rabbi Nachman. For whereas the legends of the Baal Shem were often crudely formed, the tales of Rabbi Nachman were already complex and subtle and labyrinthine, symbolic fairy tales that led directly to Kafka, whose "Castle" I also discovered in that summer of 1930.

At this time, Chassidic material was unknown in English literature, though Martin Buber had already published much of his German material, the classic modern interpretation of the Chassidic movement. I worked in the original folk sources, reshaping and retelling the tales, while in truth I was also reshaping my own relationship to my antecedents. Whether there

were Chassidim amongst my actual progenitors, I don't know, but through this folklore the whole Yiddish world in which my forebears had lived came alive to me with a new spiritual quality, a new dignity.

In Palestine, I had found a physical and social relationship to my Jewish self; in these tales from Poland I felt a spiritual homecoming. And yet this was strange, for the Chassidic material was religious material; I could not believe in it as religion; I accepted it as mythological, and in this way as part of my past, though as with Palestine I wondered whether one could successfully take what one wanted and leave the rest. I was as yet far from at ease with these relationships, but I could not press their evolution within myself.

I was getting low in funds, and whenever this happened my thoughts turned to marionette projects. This time I had dreams of enriching myself with a puppet film. The Chassidic tales in which I had been working were filled with the most imaginative elements of reincarnation, of transmigration of souls, of divine interference to bring about the consummation of predestined love. The influence appeared at once in my puppet scenario, and if I relate it here it is because creative mechanism can be revealed, no matter to what level the artist attains.

The puppet ballet began with a pair of hands opening a box containing a beautiful store doll, and leaving it near the backstage of a puppet theater. From his hook, a Pierrot looked down and saw the doll and fell in love. Freeing himself from his hook, he descended and began to make love to the doll. As she remained immobile, unresponsive, Pierrot's chagrin grew.

One by one his friends came down to help him, each trying to animate the doll. The witches tried their sorcery, the giant tried his strength, Pierrot's friend tried persuasion, and finally the Columbine, herself in love with Pierrot, attempted to transmute her own vitality to the doll. When all had failed, the physician examined the doll and discovered that she had no strings. He attached strings, but still she remained inanimate. Then the philosopher came and raised the string-ends, pointing on high.

Pierrot and his friend clambered upward in a long and difficult



voyage, until they were in the presence of the Hands. But to Pierrot's pleading, the Hands made a gesture of non-interference. Returning in utter despair to the doll, Pierrot saw that his only hope was to become as she was. He persuaded his friend to cut his strings.

And then, as Pierrot collapsed beside the doll, the compassionate Hands came down. One hand entered Pierrot, the other entered the doll. Thus, the limp figures came alive together.

Godless as I was, there showed in my tale a longing for the father who would bring together the insolubly separate, such a father as my forebears had confidently accepted through the Chassidic wonder-rabbis.

In those weeks, as I worked with my hands, modeling and constructing the puppets for my fable, and in every pause worked over my Chassidic tales, I felt I was truly living in the ancient tradition of my people, as a craftsman and a scholar.

But the interlude soon broke. The Hungarian who was to film my story pawned his camera. He assured me that after the wheat harvest his people would send him money and we would.... I packed up my puppets. A left-bank publisher hired me to translate a Sholem Asch novelette. So I had my fare back to New York.

* * *

I hurried around with the manuscript of *Yehuda.* One of my Chicago friends, Bob Ballou, was now in New York with the publishing house of Cape and Smith. Ballou liked *Yehuda;* his house accepted it. I was an author again. Nobody wanted the ending changed.

I had heard vaguely about a stock market crash, and like most people, I at first thought it affected only stockbrokers. The word depression hadn't been as yet pronounced. But people in New York seemed dazed; either they had lost their jobs or were

about to lose them. When I said I was going to look for a newspaper job they gazed at me as though they couldn't decide whether to tell the poor boy the facts of life or let him find out for himself.

However, a friend sent me up to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which published a minuscule bulletin filled with tales of Jewish troubles all over the world; we called it the *Daily Wail*. For a while, with the assistance of a Yiddish poet, I was the staff.

I didn't feel comfortable about this job. As when I had worked at the Jewish People's Institute, I felt a little ashamed—like someone who had gone back to live with his relatives only because he was broke. I believe this came from the derogatory attitude around me toward "professional Jews", and I still was not clear enough in my own mind about Jewish life to withstand the common attitude.

While in Palestine I had felt no such attitude; it would never have occured to me that Dr. Judah Magnes or Henrietta Szold could find a better use for their lives. Yet when I returned to the United States it always seemed as though the Jewish factors and the American factors were compartmentalized; I resumed the evaluation around me. When I went out with other reporters for ship-interviews with arriving celebrities, I always felt a little awkward about saying I was from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, as though this were a mark of being a second-class reporter—as I suppose I might have felt if I had had to announce myself as being from any of the foreign-language press.

Meanwhile I consoled myself that *Yehuda* would soon appear; being the first modern novel about Palestine, it couldn't fail to become a best seller. And curiously, the inferiority I felt about working for a Jewish newspaper agency did not attach to being the author of a Jewish novel. I was already depending on Palestine to erase my Jewish inferiority feeling.

One evening shortly before publication, Harrison Smith phoned me. Salesmen had reported from the road, he said, that it was impossible to sell a book named *Yehuda*. Could I supply another title by morning?

Every title that came into my head that night seemed silly or pretentious. (These matters are mysterious; only a while later a rage song hit was entitled *Who Is Yehudi?*)



In any case my book won little attention. Even in Jewish circles the reaction was small. I told myself bitterly that Jews never take up anything of their own until the gentiles have made a fuss over it. I had hoped *Yehuda* would reach the wider circles of my own generation, to whom Zionism was remote, and convey to them something of my own excitement about Palestine as a new force in our lives. But it failed to penetrate these circles, and even amongst Zionists it was dubiously received. Indeed, it seemed that I was something of a traitor. My book was filled with examples of Jewish mistreatment of Arabs. That scene where the Arabs were given water from the horses' barrel! Chalutzim would never do a thing like that! I was just trying to make people believe that the Jews were responsible for all the trouble in Palestine. And worse! There was a subplot in my novel about a girl who suffered from kleptomania, using the little sums she stole from the kibbutz for the purchase of silk stockings to attract her lover. I had believed the question of theft in a communal settlement would form an intriguing counter-theme to the question of development of individual talent. My story showed the comrades dealing with the girl's weakness intelligently. But to my astonishment I was now accused not only of contributing to the legend of sexual license in the settlements, but of painting our pioneers as thieves!

If oversensitivity to criticism is characteristic of insecurity, I should have felt linked by this to my people. But the feeling of folk-contact that I so badly needed was dissipated in these cold reactions to my book. The beginning of identification that I had brought back from Palestine and Paris, in *Yehuda* and the Chassidic material, was not permitted to develop. In the day-to-day drama of the depression, I felt adrift, and concerned mostly with earning a living.

I had meanwhile completed my Chassidic book, *The Golden Mountain*. Cape and Smith arranged to bring it out, with illustrations by Marek Szwarc. But this was the season when publishing houses were folding. Cape and Smith became Cape and Ballou, but the firm didn't last out the season and *The Golden Mountain* was taken over by Brewer, Warren and Putnam, who in turn vanished from the scene before a bookseller could scan their catalogue. Bob Ballou set up shop on his own, taking over the twice-orphaned *Golden Mountain* and a number of books

that had suffered a similar fate, among them the *Pastures of Heaven* by another obscure writer named John Steinbeck.

There I was in the lean years, scrambling around, a Villager eating at Stewart's Cafeteria or the Eighth-Street Diner. I busied myself with theater work, publicity, bits of writing, marionettes, all the odd jobs that sound so cute on book jackets, though they only prove that writers can't earn a living as writers. In a loft on Eighth Street, Lou Bunin and I built an entire marionette production of *The Hairy Ape,* but after performances at the New School for Social Research we netted five dollars each. I became an actor in Sholom Aleichem's *If I Were You,* a play about a gentile who takes the place of a Jew and thereby learns about anti-Semitism. When that closed, I became general understudy for all the males in Elmer Rice's *Counsellor-at-Law,* appearing once as The Tall Man and the very next evening as The Short Man.

From the newspapers there stared at us the lost faces of Jews photographed as they scrubbed the streets of German cities. One day Jacob Landau of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency asked me if I would cover a Nazi cell meeting in New York. The place proved to be a basement club room in the east Seventies. I said I was from Chicago, that I belonged to a unit that met at the Red Star Inn.

I sat on a bench at the long table, with my mug of beer. The meeting was like any social club meeting; there was a long account of a hiking trip. Then they arose and sang the *Horst Wessel* song. I knew enough German from my Yiddish to recognize the line about spurting Jewish blood.

They were all so terrifyingly ordinary that I understood—these could be any people, anywhere. As the meeting broke up into little chatting groups, I fled.

Those were the years when young writers were becoming self-consciously socially conscious, though it sometimes seemed that the people who insisted about the need of writing about the workers were the ones who wrote least about them.

One of my friends, Barney Cohen, was writing a Joycean Marxist epic. I used to walk down Eighth Street with Barney,



trying to reason my place in the world. Was I an American, or a Jew? Could one be both? Should I return to Palestine and try to become a Hebrew writer? Or, in the depression, would that mean I was running away from problems right here at home?

Gradually I began to feel that this utter polarization was unreal, unnecessary. If I had both elements in me, I had to give them expression, combined as they were. And more, there were struggles to take part in everywhere, indeed the general struggle was omnipresent; the struggle of the Jew and the liberal existed in America as well as in Palestine. No energy need be lost.

The days of the marches on Washington and of rent strikes had come. At the same time, the little landlords like my father were losing properties attained through lifelong toil. A story began forming itself in my mind of a Jewish landlord who built a model tenement, and of a Polish carpenter who worked on the building and then moved into one of the flats, only to find himself facing eviction in the depression. Wanting to kill the landlord, he found the owner himself bankrupt and on the verge of suicide. Who, then, was to blame? What was wrong with our world?

In a borrowed shack near Croton, I got down a draft of the novel. I worked over it in Barney's flat in New York. The front windows looked out on the Womens Jail, and the rear windows on Patchin Place where one might get a glimpse of E. E. Cummings. In this literary atmosphere I completed *The New Bridge.* I took it to Pat Covici, who was now a New York publisher in partnership with Donald Friede. They liked it, and Victor Gollancz, looking for new American writers, took the British rights. I was certain that I would be hailed as the great proletarian writer. The *New Masses* was filled with vitriolic attacks upon such ivory-tower retreatists as Thornton Wilder; a proletarian title alone, such as *Union Square,* was enough to set the logs rolling.

Moreover, this time I was determined not to neglect any of the professional angles. I was always reading about publication parties, and had never had one. Small wonder that I was still unknown! Donald Friede was an inveterate literary host, and

I unabashedly presented my demand, offering, as a special inducement, to present a marionette show at the party.

I made caricatures of Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Eugene O'Neill, and lugged my puppets up to Friede's apartment. And when the time came for cracking bon mots with the literati, I was busy setting up and taking down my puppet stage.

After these intense preparations, *The New Bridge* appeared on the first day of Roosevelt's bank holiday. I remember stopping at the publisher's office. Everyone seemed in a trance. Covici stared glumly out of the window, asked if I had been caught without cash, and offered to share five dollars pocket money with me.

The bank holiday seemed to make a hole in history. Even the reviews were slow in appearing. Finally there was a little notice in the *Times,* with the observation that all the "good" people in my story bore Jewish and foreign names, while the police and bankers had Anglo-Saxon names. I was startled. Of course the observation was oversimplified. I wondered, for the first time, whether there was a goyish oversensitivity to match our own; was I guilty of prejudice, or the reviewer?

In the light of the times I could take the reviewer's remark only as an attack from the "other side". Perhaps I should interpret it today as an appeal against any sort of prejudice; but so much depends on the context given by immediate events. In the model tenement of my novel, there were Irish and Polish and Jewish families who united to resist the eviction of the carpenter. My only thesis was to show them driven to united action in the breakdown of our economy, and underneath, in my portrait of the well-meaning landlord, I was trying to cry out that the Jews were not to blame, that people like my own father were destroyed just like their tenants.

Only a few hundred copies of the book were sold. My frustration was so intense that one day I said I would go peddle my book from door to door. I took a carton of books and went out to Sunnyside. I remembered how as a kid I had worked for a week selling magazine subscriptions from door to door, and how ashamed I had been of taking advantage of people's sympathies. Well, I told myself, I would only do it for a few hours



as a publicity stunt, as a demonstration that my book was meant for the average person. I started ringing doorbells.

Most people accepted me as just another door to door salesman. When I said I had written the book myself, they didn't seem surprised. They were good natured and "sorry they couldn't help out." The whole question of the relationship of the modern writer to his audience was pitilessly exposed in my futile gesture, and I knew it. In one house I ran into the wife of an advertising man who comprehended; I felt bitterly embarrassed when she insisted on buying a copy of my book.

At the end of the afternoon I called my publisher's publicity man and offered my tale; nothing came of it. I had to recognize the incident as a form of self-humiliation, of beating my head against a stone wall.

Worse, I doubted myself completely as a writer. I had published five books which had got no response. I was twenty-eight. For each failure there was a plausible circumstance; one could always blame the publisher or the title or the depression. But always there remained self-doubt. Perhaps I was just not a good writer. Perhaps I wasn't talking for anybody. Perhaps I was morally at fault for having left Palestine. Somehow I had to integrate what I had encountered so far. Yet material kept forming in my mind, and whether or not I was a worthy writer I had to give expression to what came up in me.

It was then that my view turned toward home, toward Chicago.

* * *

For some time a monumental novel had been working up in my mind. In it, I wanted to trace the pattern of my own group in the social organism, perhaps as an effort to find my own place.

I felt that I had a fundamental observation to make on a form of society in our time in America. While novelists emphasized the individual in the family unit as the determining human relationship, I saw the surrounding group, the bunch, as perhaps even more important than the family in the formative years.

Particularly in the children of immigrants, the life-values were determined largely through these group relationships. It was this that I wanted to bring out in my novel, and I wanted to study it in the group I knew best, the Jews of Chicago.

In essence, I suppose I wanted to justify my own formation, to say: see how all ties of family and tradition were shattered by the impact of American civilization, see how we could not honor the way of life of our parents when they themselves held their way of dubious value, see how we had to stumble into life.

This was no idea that could be worked out in a summer's tour de force, snatched on a last hundred dollars. I needed a lengthy period of security; I needed also to renew my contact with Chicago.

A new magazine was being started there, which I shall call *Paradise,* for in discussing matters of public principle which were to arise between myself and the publisher, I do not wish to seem to be motivated to call attention to actual persons or institutions. In Chicago's slickest new office building, I found the editor and publisher; the first issue of *Paradise* had gone to press but had not yet appeared; however, they were already changing from a quarterly to a monthly and would need editorial help. I told Melvin Morris, the publisher, that I had half my time to sell.

There began a relationship which was to endure for a number of years and through an important phase of development for me. For as it happened, while I was writing my novel about Jewish life in America, I was living through an intensive sample of this life at the office. My publisher was a west sider who might have been one of the old bunch whose adjustment I was trying to trace. A nerve-eaten idea man, he had come up through advertising promotion and trade magazines.

I felt immediately on home ground with him. He was a sharp bargainer out to get the best of his adversary, and the world was his adversary. Morris passed his days between the office and the coffee shop below, seething with promotional ideas, schemes, combinations. Even after the spectacular end of our relationship, several years later, I was more fascinated than repulsed.

In the beginning, I took on the job of manuscript reading,



together with a monthly film review, together with a satiric verse feature illustrated by puppets, all as a half-time job. Manuscripts were then coming in at the rate of a hundred a week; soon this was a thousand. In the first days, I decided on a personal rejection slip, knowing too well the demoralizing effect of the printed rejection. I felt that in most cases a few words could indicate the basic reason for the rejection, and that this effort was worth while.

But as the material came piling in, I was really caught in my own device. I tried to backtrack, suggesting a printed slip for the hopeless stuff. But up came the business manager, with a pailful of enthusiastic letters from recipients of the personal rejection slips. *Paradise,* it seemed, had discovered the way to the hearts of would-be writers, who represented a vast proportion of potential magazine buyers. A change in the personal slip policy might seriously affect the magazine's circulation. So the hand-written rejection had to go on. All I could do was scribble, "Sorry, not our style," a few hundred times daily as a penance for my overeagerness.

But while I was working away at my Jewish novel on my homedays, the job taught me a great deal about the writing business. The theory current in writing circles was that *Paradise* was buying all the bottom-of-the-trunk material possessed by famous writers, since many "big names" appeared in the magazine. Actually, this wasn't poor material, but often of the best. For the *Paradise* formula was in itself a grotesque comment on the position of literature in the United States. We were putting out an expensive quasi-sophisticated magazine, but with some truly good writing. The publisher knew that sexy gag drawings sold the magazine. The quality of the reading matter was of little importance; it could even be good. Thus, the desire of the editor, Winters, to bring out a literary magazine, combined with Morris's commercial flair, made it possible to publish some remarkable material in those first years. And Morris was quick to realize that the best literature could also be the cheapest.

*Story Magazine* paid twenty-five dollars for its pieces. Aside from *Harper's,* the *Atlantic Monthly,* the *Yale Review,* there was scarcely an available market for the unslanted short story. In plain arithmetic, the leading serious magazines taken all

together could absorb perhaps a few dozen short stories a month. That would scarcely provide publication for the output of our best established writers, let alone all the gifted young writers. Obviously a tremendous amount of topnotch material even from well-known authors could be obtained for practically nothing, since any writer would rather see his work in print than in a drawer.

This was the *Paradise* big-name formula. Some of the greatest literary figures in America received around a hundred dollars per story; occasionally a Dreiser got as high as two hundred and fifty.

These, and other business practices particularly in the solicitation of advertising, soon made the management rather unpopular in the publishing world, and it was inevitable that the methods should be tagged as Jewish. As tales about our being a kike outfit came from New York, Morris grew bitter, and the bitterness took the form of a sense of personal rivalry with the publisher of *Time*, who epitomized all that was non-Jewish. *Time* had just brought out *Life*. Morris would prove himself by bringing out a classier rival, a jewel of good taste. Thus, *Beauty* appeared.

I was now reading for the two magazines, with of course no increase in pay. Yet I could not but feel a sympathy for my employer as I saw him reacting to the same goads, driven by the same inner compulsions that had given me so much trouble with myself.

* * *

At this time, I married. I have felt it out of place in this study to discuss personal matters that did not have a relationship to general problems. But since I married a gentile, I confronted the question of intermarriage. With all my absorption in the Jewish question—how? Why? Was it an act of spite against this very factor that had given me so much trouble?

It was my reasoning that a Jew can feel free to marry a gentile only when he has fully worked out the role of Jewishness



in his life, when he feels secure in his Jewish self. Then he no longer needs the support of restrictions, for one restricts one's actions out of fear of making mistakes in the unknown.

What of the burden of race perpetuation? I had never felt that there was in our time a danger of the Jewish folk being dissolved through intermarriage. One cannot realistically confront oneself with the threat: "If I do it, and everybody does it, the Jews will disappear, and that will somehow be a sin." For the question is by no means so simple. Intermarriage as often brings gentiles into the folk as it leads Jews out of it, and in any case it concerns not "everybody" but a small proportion of the Jews, and it is not generally undertaken as an example-giving exercise in anti-nationalism, but as a personal act. The individual problem, in the particular situation, is stronger and of greater importance than the question of burden of race.

What of the children? Certainly this creates a complex problem for the child. Yet nothing is really solved by suppression. And no human problem can be solved by rote. Some feel that the half-Jew is necessarily on his way to assimilation and that anyone who marries and begets half-Jews must believe in assimilation. Obviously this was not my case. Perhaps I had the hope that the world would, even in my children's time, arrive at the stage where being a half-Jew is not so much a depressing problem as a matter of affirmative interest. My son of this marriage will, I hope, be intelligent and brave enough to work out his own relationship to Jewishness. He will in any case be given every opportunity to know what Jews are.

It may seem that I perversely made matters more complicated for myself. Someone with so involved a Jewish complex should perhaps have resisted adding more complexity. But just as probably I was compelled to take on this complexity too, in seeking to live through the whole Jewish problem.

And the deciding factors, as in any marriage, were personal.

We set up house in a coldwater flat over a garage in the midst of the University of Chicago tennis courts, and proudly pointed out to our radical friends that our next-door neighbor was a streetcar conductor.

I started to organize the material for my novel. But while writing *The Old Bunch* I became involved in an episode characteristic of the times, when prejudices suddenly became highlighted by political and economic stress.

I had dramatized *The New Bridge* into a play called *Model Tenement,* and submitted it to the Federal Theater Project, just then created. One of the announced objects of the project was the production of plays by new authors, particularly plays not likely to be commercially produced.

From the commercial point of view, *Model Tenement* was difficult. It had an immense cast, and required a three-story setting. But the Federal Theater, conversely, was eager for plays in which a large number of actors could be employed.

The director for the midwest region, Thomas Wood Stevens, scheduled *Model Tenement* as the project's opening production. Casting began. I would rush from my manuscript reading to a film screening, gobble a cornedbeef sandwich, and get in half an hour at the rehearsal hall before returning to the *Paradise* offices.

For rehearsals, the theater project had scrounged a large basement room in a naval armory. The walls were adorned with ancient banners and muskets. About sixty actors were reading for parts—everything from brokendown ex-vaudevillians to adolescent little theater girls. Oddly enough, they made an excellent element for *Model Tenement,* as they were an assortment of the people themselves, rather than an even cut of Broadway actors. And one could feel in them a pleased surprise that they were not after all boondoggling, but engaged in a production that spoke of their own problems, their own world. One could feel the play take life.

One day I was surprised as I approached along the armory corridor to hear strange lines being read. The director, Ted Veehman, got me aside and explained that an order had come from Washington to abandon *Model Tenement.*

From whom in Washington?

He didn't know.

And for what reason?

He shrugged.

But had a copy of the play been sent to Washington?

He was sure that all copies were in use, here in rehearsal.



Then on what could the order have been based?

He felt certain that the matter would be straightened out in a few days; meanwhile he would have to make a show of reading other material.

I got in touch with Stevens. He too was at a loss. I thought of a lad around the project who passionately desired to produce Marlowe's *Faustus,* with himself in tights as the devil, and wondered whether some such theatrical intrigue was behind the order. But this proved a false scent. I felt then that we ought to publicize the suppression of the play, but Stevens asked me to withhold such action until he had made every attempt to find out what was behind the Washington order. He hoped that Hallie Flannagan, head of the Federal Theater Project, would be able to straighten out the matter.

Weeks went by. The play was announced again, and an opening date was set—and a new ban came from Washington. On a trip to New York, I sought out the Federal Theater headquarters in a cluttered little office reached by the back stairway of a closed bank. The corridors were lined with character actors and little Martha Graham girls. Hallie Flannagan was all sympathy, indignation, and feverish hurry. She would fight the thing out in Washington.

Back in Chicago, our opening date went by. The Chicago group was now far behind schedule. The actors were demoralized. And then, tales began to circulate among them. The play was banned because I was a red. For just at that time there was a tumult in Chicago over Mayor Kelly's suppression of *Tobacco Road.* I became chairman of a protest meeting. Could it be that I was marked as a red for this? And how could the incident have led to a suppression order on my play, from Washington?

Spring was approaching; several other plays had been tried and dropped; there were criticisms from all sides of the project's wasteful inactivity. A crisis was near.

And then one day Ted Veehman called me and said he had a tip from a member of the cast. If I would go and see a certain Father Giles I might find the visit worth while.

This was baffling. What did a priest have to do with the Federal Theater? Nevertheless, I went. Father Giles received me most cordially: he was a cultured man, and quite sympathetic.

I explained about the play. Father Giles nodded. Yes, in fact one of his parishioners had come to him about this federal play some months ago. The young man was an actor in the theater project, and had been asked to keep an eye out for objectionable material; he had reported the play as objectionable. Father Giles had so notified the mayor's office, and further steps had been taken.

Further steps, I supposed, meant telling the proper machine contact in Washington that there was a dirty red play being put on in the red theater project, and to better call it off as Father Giles objected to it. And so a wire had come from Washington.

— The young man had been asked to keep an eye out. By whom, might I ask?

Why, by the mayor's office, of course. The priest smiled. It was surely the normal thing to place a control agent in the federal theater project and for the operation to proceed through a priest.

Father Giles said he would be glad if he could prove helpful to me.

Yes, I said, I wondered if he had read the play?

No, he hadn't had the oportunity.

This was the point of greatest shock to me. No one had bothered to check the little agent's report. He had only to say the word, and the fix was in. "Would you mind reading the play?" I asked.

He would be delighted to help me, the priest said. I left a script with him. A few days later I returned. He had marked certain passages—a few hells and damns. There was one scene where a boy appeared with only his pants on, no shirt—the priest thought he ought to wear an undershirt.

And was that all?

Why yes, that was all. A most interesting and deserving play.

And for that, we had battled against a blank wall for five months! I made the changes and brought the play back to him. He was all smiles, and wrote a letter to the mayor praising my co-operative attitude and declaring that the play could now be produced.

We had quite a talk about the theater. Father Giles, it turned out, was the unofficial censor of theater in Chicago; he was Ed Kelly's personal advisor on these cultural matters. It was



he who had visited *Tobacco Road* and suggested that it be banned. But as to my play, he did not find it as immoral as *Tobacco Road,* particularly now that it had been corrected.

In a way the incident was grotesque. After all, once we had been directed to the priest, everything had been easily straightened out, hadn't it?

Unhappily, an entire season had passed before a chance remark led us to penetrate the secret ways in which the machine operated. Criticism of the Chicago project had brought Hallie Flannagan to Chicago to find out why nothing had been produced. She was fighting for a chance to establish a lasting national theater, she declared, and if one play like mine had to fall by the wayside the loss had to be accepted for the sake of the greater goal.

Stevens resigned. A smiling offend-nobody man was brought to Chicago to produce a musical show. The timing had been unfortunate for me as Stevens had resigned on the day I was seeing Father Giles with my corrected script. On the very next day the little emissary from the city hall told director Veehman that *Model Tenement* could now go on, it was okay.

Hallie Flannagan was still in town. I phoned her. It was too late. Policy changes had been made.

There was one point I could not get out of my mind. No one in authority had bothered to question what was being suppressed, to read the play. I glimpsed with absolute terror how government could come within government, how a little city hall gang could strangle an action of Washington, how the whim of a streetcorner party onhanger could override federal law. Was fascism different?

Censorship, people imagine, is always a useful thing for an author, bringing doubled attention to his work. It is true that there have been sensational examples in this direction. Even in the federal theater, there were productions such as those of Orson Welles and Marc Blitzstein that succeeded despite attempts at suppression. But there are also cases where censorship kills, and this was such a case.

I realized that as a Jew I was in danger of misinterpreting the position of the Church in this affair. I couldn't help imagining

that the little fascist spy would have reported that the author of the "red" play was a Jew. As soon as I was directed to a priest, all my childhood hatred and fear of those who called us Christ-killers came into play.

Catholic friends of mine pointed out that it was not a Church action that had suppressed *Model Tenement;* it had been the action of an individual priest who had perhaps been a little careless. When a priest took political action of this sort it was an individual matter, just as when Father Coughlin spoke.

I never could understand such a formula. It seemed to me that when a man's power stemmed from the authority of an institution, that institution had to be responsible for his use of its power. Otherwise, one had to consider that a priest was acting for the Church except when he did something wrong; then he was only an individual.

Some of us fear to make the slightest criticism of the Catholic Church, for it is easy to treat any attack on the Church as an attack on religion, and this awakens passions, for it is a violation of a taboo. Yet there are liberals within the Catholic Church who agree that the imposition of a minority's will upon the remainder of the population is inadmissable. This is the danger in any form of censorship.

After all, it may be said, the entire incident was a regrettable error, a misunderstanding. The mayor's personal censor might just as easily have happened to be a schoolteacher or a businessman. And look how quick the father was to rectify his error once you came to him directly. And yes, of course it was regrettable that it was then too late for your play to be produced, that is too bad.

Naturally I felt deeply injured at the time, and it was difficult to consider that the priest had not acted specifically in his Church capacity, nor that I had not been attacked specifically as a Jew. We had rather been in our positions as conservative and liberal, and then it had turned out—as it so often does after the damage is done—that the priest was not entirely conservative. I was to have other encounters with the politics of the Church, in which it was to prove difficult to remember that anti-Semitism is not inevitably a part of fascism. While the basic political role of the Catholic Church in our time is abhorrent to me, I had to recognize an ambivalence in the attitude of the Church toward Jews.



The Christ-killer attitude could be changed, and was indeed changing. Through Europe, after the war, I was to find Jews who had been saved by Catholics, and not necessarily at the price of conversion.

But in the period of rising fascism in the nineteen-thirties it was most difficult to separate out these attributes. As Jews, we identified our troubles with fascism, and what had happened to me in connection with my play followed out the fascist pattern completely. And during this period we saw the universal fight for social gains as a fight against fascism, and we saw in this fight the eventual dissolution of the Jewish problem. Certainly our strongest lever is that of general social progress. But there are problems of cultural adjustment which are not completely involved with social attitudes that have been stimulated by economic inequities. Indeed, the liquidation of racial prejudice can stimulate, rather than follow the liquidation of economic inequity.

The experience of prejudice sometimes has its ironic aspects, and I found it more grotesque than amusing that my fascist episode in Chicago censorship was paralleled by an experience with nudism.

It may seem far fetched that I could encounter the Jewish problem even in this environment, and I indeed began to imagine, at this time, that I was the original author about whom the story of the Elephant and the Jewish Problem had been told.

But it so happened, that spring, that in seeking a countryside place where I might work on my book, we found a nudist colony listed about fifty miles from Chicago, on a little lake near Valparaiso. For my half-weeks of writing, the location was ideal, as I could get there in an hour.

We drove out one weekend for a test visit. There was a gemlike lake, surrounded by woods. An old farmhouse, a pingpong shed, and a few tents clustered on one side of the lake. On the other side, I could built a shack and work in isolation.

On Saturday evening, we were introduced to the circle of nudists. There were about twenty, seated around a campfire. Our first reaction, a typical conformity impulse, was a sense of

embarrassment at being dressed. So we stepped aside, conformed, and joined the circle.

There is a tittering question that arises at once, in any discussion of nudism; the answer is no, there is no sexual embarrassment for the male. In two years at this club, I never saw such a situation, although there were always, among the frightful, at least a few attractive women in sight. The social frame, of course, acts as an inhibitor.

The weekend was pleasant enough. The people seemed average city folk; there was a young man gym teacher, an advertising man, a printer with his family. The members didn't seem cranks on the nudist subject; some wore bits of clothing for convenience, going nude only for swimming, sunbathing, and volleyball.

The following week we hauled out a truckload of doors and windows from the dismantled buildings of the World's Fair, and put up a shack.

The place proved excellent. On weekdays the grounds were deserted, and even the weekend activity was confined to the other side of the lake; I could work undisturbed.

That summer the atmosphere was one of general friendliness such as might be found in any small summer colony. My work was going well. I stuck it out at the camp through fall and winter, installing a little stove, and keeping up my halfweeks even when I had to wade through a foot of snow to get to the shack.

Sometimes I carried a load of manuscripts out with me, for reading between spells of writing. I must say that this put a strain on my courage, for I was with one hand turning aside the world's superfluity of literature, and with my other hand adding to it.

The following summer the nudist club doubled and tripled in membership. We were of course among the old guard, indeed we were pointed out as the first who had "built a house", though now there were other shacks, and there was a good deal of real-estate talk about subdividing and incorporating and building pavilions and a casino. A rather curious little community was developing; leaders had emerged.

The center of gravity was the "coffeehouse" of an elderly gymnast with the odd name of Antonio Pricklewood. He preserved a faint Boston accent, spoke with a display of learning, frequently employing quotations from the classics, and was said



at one time to have been a professor. Pricklewood had built a pagoda where he served coffee every Sunday afternoon to the nudists. There, the members entered into discussions on politics, literature, suntan oils, and real-estate values. Their views on general matters were on the whole rather liberal; indeed there was a high-school teacher who was suspected of favoring communism. Her opinions counterbalanced those of the gym teacher who believed that all social ills could be eliminated if people lived on a diet of nuts and raisins, as there would then be plenty for everybody. There was a young man who planned to go to Alaska to become a fur trapper, and there was a young German who taught the trapper weight-lifting and rope-walking, presumably in preparation for his Alaskan career. Another of the intellectual leaders of the community was the young advertising man who consorted with a tall damsel who had beautiful legs; they would carry on a *New Yorker* magazine style of conversation, and they were our canned-beer drinking companions. And there was a grotesquely obese couple who lived in a trailer like two fat porksausages in a can, and they got drunk and fought all the time.

There were swarms of children who were beautiful to watch, and once for a few weeks there was a visiting couple from whom we could not take our eyes: the woman looked exactly like a Cranach Eve, a newly formed creature, womanly woman, moving with liquid ease through the green foliage, providing, in herself, aesthetic justification for an entire nudist movement.

On Sunday afternoons we played pingpong and volleyball in the face of swinging pendulous breasts, and week after week my pages piled up. I was just about through with the main draft of the long novel when a curious, enlightening event occurred.

As the club had expanded in membership there was a new set with whom we were scarcely acquainted. One Sunday we brought out a guest. Generally, anyone could come as an occasional guest under the guise of being a prospective member. Our visitor was Albert Parry, the writer, who was then completing his doctorate at the University of Chicago, in Russian history.

Parry rowed around the lake, singing. His powerful Russian accents could be heard where I was at work on the knoll. Presently a little group of men appeared at my door. They came in for a visit. They were, it seemed, the club's membership com-

mittee. With embarrassed circumlocution, they arrived at the subject of their visit. I was, they said, one of the most respected and beloved of members. No one had any objection whatsoever to me. But the membership committee felt it necessary to inform me that my friend couldn't be considered as a prospective member because—wasn't it a Jewish accent?

Our first outraged reaction was of course to pack up and get out. Luckily, I thought, I had finished my novel, so my work at least would not be upset. But during the week we got to talking to a few of the members. The big ideological schism in nudist circles began.

None of our friends had heard of any discriminatory regulations. We scrutinized the club's by-laws. There was nothing on the subject. The membership committee apparently had a little agreement amongst themselves.

There were phone calls, conferences, petitions drawn, showdowns demanded. The following weekend we returned to the camp to face out the question. The ludicrous aspects of the matter were naturally inescapable. I had never before given the subject any thought, but now as I began to look around and to identify the remainder of the circumcised, one by one, I discovered that I was indeed the only Jewish member.

And now the question emerged upon a high political plane. The radical high-school teacher went from tent to tent, from trailer to shack, with a petition. The text pointed out that nudism was an advanced, enlightened movement of people free of social prejudice, the very act of going nude before others was a gesture that affirmed the equality of all human beings, in their skins. How, then, could our club tolerate distinction of race?

For three weeks I sat in my eyrie nakedly defending the world against prejudice. One by one, our adherents climbed the knoll to testify their solidarity. The printer came around to tell me how shocked he was at the behavior of the membership committee; the printer's union, he reminded me, was the oldest in the United States, and truly a democratic institution. The German weight-lifter appeared one Sunday afternoon and told me of a visit he had made back to Germany, some months before, and how unhappy his mother was under Hitlerism. Meanwhile the petitions had been gathered and presented to the governing committee at the coffeehouse.



But the officers of the club now refused to bring the question before the membership, falling back on that traditional plea for avoidance of responsibility in a democracy, "People don't want trouble. Everybody is out here just to relax and live in quiet. They don't want to be disturbed with problems." And the next implication was, of course, "You see, as soon as even one of you people gets in somewhere, it makes trouble."

Week after week the officers stalled. By now, we were committed to the issue. I had to threaten to bring the question before a larger public, through the press. Knowing of my newspaper contacts, the officers became alarmed. The long tongue of the Hearst press had already been licking around the edges of the camp.

Actually, the standards of sexual morality in the colony were normal. But as in any summer colony, a few peccadillos were to be found. And there was, in particular, a sixteen-year-old damsel, the daughter of one of the camp leaders, whose adventures would have fulfilled the wildest hopes of the most salacious of city editors.

And once the newspapers got to writing about the camp, what would become of the neat plans for a real-estate development?

On the Sunday of the annual club meeting, I made a last demand that our question be put on the agenda. I went to the coffeehouse and had a roaring session with three of the officers. Finally one of them demanded of me, "What's your price for getting out? All you people have a price."

He was an old man and I couldn't hit him.

But I got the question put on the agenda by submitting my resignation from the club because of anti-Semitism in the membership committee, and demanding that the acceptance of my resignation be put to a vote.

Sometimes we play a game: sitting in a group of civilized people at dinner or in a livingroom, we imagine how it would be if they were all suddenly naked, continuing in their attitudes and in their speeches. Here it was so.

The naked members gathered on the grass beside the lake. It happened that the presiding officer had recently been through an abdominal operation; he wore a queer sort of half-corset around his waist, and nothing else. There he stood, laced in this

garb, hemming and stuttering through my letter of resignation.

No sooner had he read it than one of the new members arose, a butcher, a German, and a stout American Nazi. He declared himself.

It would be superfluous to record the things that were said in that naked assembly. Every argument was repeated, from the one about loudmouths who litter up a summer place, to speeches about nudists as forward-minded people. There were a few flareups that nearly brought blows. There were oily speeches about peace and quiet. The question was finally forced to a vote, and we won by a small majority. The resignation was refused, and the membership committee was instructed to cease discrimination.

It was only then that I arrived at the illuminating phase of the experience. We had, nominally, won. But as I walked in the grounds, then and in the following weeks, I didn't know whom to smile to as a friend, whom to remember as an anti-Semite. I felt uncertain about entering the volleyball game, the pingpong. And always, there were individuals whom I did recall as having been against us, and who were otherwise on good terms with friends of ours.

Worst was the feeling that certain people had voted for me, personally, rather than on the question. I even encountered a segment of opinion which was surprised that the question mattered so much to me, since I had married a gentile. And one morning Mr. Pricklewood approached me with a prepared smile, announcing that he had attended a meeting of an interdenominational council of preachers, rabbis, and priests, and that he therefore had a better understanding of my views on the situation.

Yet the membership committee had not been changed, but only instructed to mend its ways. Could I control them? Could I go out and gather Jews, urging them to become nudists so as to consolidate our victory in this club?

Much later, in encountering the surviving Jews in European countries, I felt that I knew in a very small way what it was that they sensed around them when they considered whether they could settle again in the places where they had lived.

For some weeks we stuck it out. But we knew who had really won.

My book was ready to be sent off. I debated whether to set



fire to the shack where it had been written. Finally, I rented a large truck and carted the cottage off to the dunes. My most Jewish of novels had been written in a nest of anti-Semites.

* * *

*The Old Bunch* had been written on an advance from Reynall and Hitchcock, the first before-writing advance I had ever secured, for a discussion of future work had always carried, for me, a superstitious danger of unfulfillment. Beneath was the never conquered dread of becoming a wish-artist, a fake who goes about talking of the things he is some day going to write, without ever getting them written. However, an advance can also be an outside force added to the writer's inner compulsion to do his book. For though there remains a widely accepted notion that writers enjoy scribbling away, most writers have to overcome complex psychic forces in getting at their work—and these forces, which often constitute a block, will be discussed further along.

I had about completed my first draft of *The Old Bunch* when Mr. Hitchcock passed through Chicago and had lunch with me. I described the novel to him, feeling no restraint since it was by then on paper. He was politely enthusiastic, but when I had done he broached one point. The novel, as I described it, appeared to be entirely about a Jewish "streetcorner gang." I allowed the gang conception to pass, although my characters were incipient lawyers, doctors, and schoolteachers. Now, it seemed to him, and this was only a hesitant suggestion, that my book would be more typical if the characters were a mixture of races—an Irishman, an Italian, etc.

I tried to explain my thought that in the sociological structure of American cities this was not happening so fast. At least it hadn't happened in the society I was describing. That in fact my observations tended to show that racial groups remained segregate, and perhaps this was the importance of my novel.

He became thoughtful and said I would of course have to do my book my own way.

I am sure that a million examples could be offered to prove

that I was wrong, that the melting pot is no illusion, that mixed groups of Jewish, Irish and Polish youngsters are common. And naturally a novel about such a group seemed more attractive and salable to a publisher than a novel about persistent differentiation. But he stayed within the rules of the game: he was the publisher, I was the writer; I had to write my book my own way. I remembered this encounter some years later in a similar situation.

Eventually *The Old Bunch* was ready. I shipped it off to Reynall and Hitchcock and awaited the verdict.

There is nothing so dreadful as this period, in writing No matter how long one has been writing, one is never sure of one's work. All artists must feel that they work in the dark, following out something within themselves; sometimes the work is long, they tunnel for a year or more, yet always fearing that when the work is at last brought out in daylight it will prove of little worth.

At last the answer came; it was no.

I went through a few very black weeks, for that year had brought upon me an accumulation of frustrations; my play had been suppressed, and now I was rejected. I recalled the conversation about the mixed streetcorner gang and told myself that since the publisher had really wanted a book in that vein he could never have found sympathy with the book as I wrote it. But no amount of rationalization can outweigh a writer's feeling that his book should be strong enough so that no publisher can bring himself to refuse it. And especially, after the publisher had put up a thousand dollars in advance. To turn down a book after making an advance on it was simply to say that it was hopeless.

Ann Watkins sent it on to a publisher whom I shall call Stonehill, and behold the book was accepted.

Analysts may sometimes wonder at the artist's range from despair to elation, but the seesaw effects of our supposedly reasonable world can scarcely be normalizing. I had been turned down by what might be considered an average house, only to be accepted by a firm regarded as having the highest of literary standards.

But Stonehill's had not accepted the novel without reservations. They considered the book too long. It was indeed long, though



*Gone With The Wind* had appeared and the vogue seemed to be for monumental novels.

I went to New York for consultation. First I met the head reader, a stocky fellow of about my own age, who had "discovered" my book, David Zablodowsky. Like Bob Ballou, Zablodowsky was one of the people in the publishing business who give writers the feeling that their effort is worth while. At once, I felt that he had a complete understanding of what I had tried to do in *The Old Bunch*—all the more, since he came from a background similar to my own. He agreed that the book was somewhat prolix and that cutting wouldn't hurt.

I had lunch with the chief editor and the publisher. In sum, they thought the book a third too long. I didn't know that this was in part a binding problem, as a volume of more than a thousand pages becomes too heavy. I took the manuscript home and began to chop, while mountains of material accumulated at *Paradise.*

Who can tell whether any work is better in its original than in its corrected state? Zablodowsky, later, felt that the book had lost some of its richness. I felt that I learned much, that the construction was improved, but that the cut novel was jumpy, in parts, through overcondensation.

In due course, *The Old Bunch* appeared. Now this was for me a magnum opus.

First, there was a shocked reaction from my own people. After the peculiar reception accorded *Yehuda,* I should have anticipated what came now; but with the artist's euphoria I had hoped for understanding. I believed that on the whole I had written a warm book about Jews; out of a neighborhood group of a few dozen youngsters there emerged doctors, lawyers, a sculptor, an idealistic radical, schoolteachers and good wives, a successful athlete, ambitious businessmen, and only one or two defeated and broken personalities. It was a very high balance.

But *The Old Bunch* was preached against in the temples and described in some of the Jewish press as a degradation of our people. I received a call from the secretary of the Anti-Defamation League, who invited me to lunch at one of the downtown Jewish clubs where the atmosphere was almost as polite and serene as in the Union League Club. I was obviously in for a well-planned "little talk." The general theme was: Why do you young Jewish

writers feel impelled to describe your people in this disgraceful manner? Before coming to *The Old Bunch,* he pointed out Jerome Weidman's *I Can Get It For You Wholesale,* which had also just appeared.

I considered the Weidman novel a piece of artifice with a core of quality. As a caustic, I felt that it might not be without eventual wholesome effect on the Jewish community, though I was ready to admit this value was debatable as against the effect it could have outside the Jewish community in deepening the anti-Semitic stereotype of the wily unprincipled Jew. Weidman's hero, it will be remembered, was a cheat, a trickster, a vulgar and voluble fellow whose one redeeming (and caricatured) trait was his love for his mother, expressed through appreciation of her cooking. This novel, incidentally, was soon to be duplicated in another setting in Shulberg's *What Makes Sammy Run;* it must therefore be considered that the central character was prevalent enough to have aroused creative revulsion in both writers, and that the community should have addressed itself to correcting the character, rather than the novels.

But I couldn't see how *The Old Bunch* might be included in the same category as *I Can Get It For You Wholesale.* I suggested that my luncheon host make a list of the persons in my novel, and then tell me which ones he considered a discredit to the Jewish people. I heard no more about the matter. But these questions cannot be resolved through any rule. I seem to have tried to prove that another man's book might have overstepped the boundaries of offensiveness while mine didn't. That was something for the community itself to decide. The real question was one which still confronts us, the question whether freedom of expression should be permitted when it is socially destructive. And who shall judge, and how is one to judge whether a piece of writing is eventually destructive? There is only one issue from this dilemma: the realization that hard-and-fast rules cannot exist in human society, and that only constant application of the best wisdom that is in us, constant, scrupulous care and attention, can protect the truth.

Though there were things in my novel that shocked some Jews into self-recognition, the consequent resentment soon wore off, and in a few years the Jewish community as a whole seemed to have a warm reaction to *The Old Bunch.* This was comforting to



me not so much in a sense of vindication, but in quieting a genuine fear that the book might have said things differently than I intended.

There were, indeed, some compensations at the very beginning, as in a letter from Detroit which informed me that I had been writing about a circle of young Detroit Jews, giving me their names and actual backgrounds, which proved astonishingly parallel to those of the people in my novel. Zablodowsky, too, had told me, "It's my life." I felt that I had written true. And I realized that some of the resentment in other sections of the Jewish public might not have come from the realism of the book, but from its insistent demonstration that the folk held together, and even from its attempt to integrate what was happening in Palestine with the American Jewish scene by means of a character who, like myself, became deeply affected by an almost accidental Palestine experience. My book had offended those who were assimilationists at heart; they felt somehow threatened by it, as though I were saying they were not really Americans, instead of simply reminding them that they were still Jews.

And it seemed to me that even the presentation of my novel had, against its content, participated in this evasion. The presentation emphasized the American aspects of the work, so that only the attentive reader of the blurb would realize it was a book about Jews. It was my belief that the book would have received more attention, and even sold better, had it been frankly emphasized as a Jewish novel.

It was the old bête noire, the old taboo. I felt it strikingly exemplified through a comparison of the reception of James Farrell's work. He wrote of the same time, the same forces, with something of the same viewpoint and a great deal of the same background. His was the Irish world of the south side, mine the Jewish world of the west side. Contrary to an idea commonly encountered in careless reviews of his work as well as of mine, we did not write of the "seamy side" or of the "downtrodden elements." We wrote of the lower middle class and of the middle middle class. Lonigan's father had a business, owned real estate; my characters, too, came from small-business families. Farrell wrote more out of a sense of revolt and decay, while in my own view, I wrote with the object of revealing a whole organism, much of it repulsive, parts of it in decay, but within which there

remained a great capacity for self-renewal. Perhaps we exemplified Irish poesy and Jewish rationale; we both had been Lovett's pupils, and the two books were destined to stay alive among the few novels that lasted through the coming decade.

Yet Farrell could present an insulated Irish circle, and his work would be regarded as in the direct mainstream of American writing. This could not happen with a book about Jews. I had known this since my first attempts at serious writing, and I find that it is just as true today, for in a recent talk with one of the most sensitive and intelligent of American publishers, who was discussing the work of a new young writer, I was told, "I'd love to bring him out, he has great talent, but his writing is all about Jews. It just won't carry."

Public acceptance and literary attention are often equated with sales. But the fact that *The Old Bunch* sold fairly well, and that there are occasional best sellers about Jews, such as *Jews Without Money,* does not really affect the taboo, the sense that books about Jews, like the Jews themselves, are somehow "different". The taboo is obviously ingrained with the folk-attitude toward Jews, and I have always felt that it is not to be overcome by "passing", but by bringing the Jew, real and fictional, into full light. That a book is about Jews should be emphasized rather than left unstated, if for nothing else, then for the sake of clarity in human relationships.

Peculiarly enough, the taboo does not seem to apply to works about Jews translated from Yiddish or other languages. Then, the work is presented frankly as foreign. Clearly, the Jew is still thought of as foreign, and the object should be to get people—including Jews themselves—to understand in just what ways they are different.

This cuts right across the whole complex of opinions about how to deal with the Jewish problem in America, including how to deal with anti-Semities. Powerful organized influences in the Jewish community have for many years proceeded with the assumption that the less said about Jews as Jews, the better. Particularly about Jewish internal problems. I had a feeling that my own publisher at bottom was in sympathy with this point of view. This would mean that the publication of a realistic novel like *The Old Bunch* was perhaps counter to his own idea of good American Jewish policy; outside of his capacity as a



publisher he would perhaps have had the same feeling as the representative of the Anti-Defamation League who took me to lunch. But as a publisher he had not wanted to deny the merit of the book, and had brought it out. I felt that there was possibly a conflict of this sort unconsciously in the background, which might have affected the presentation of my novel.

And I felt that this whole approach was wrong, for it was the Jewish aspect which gave the book the unique part of its value. I believe it can be safely said today that this was the outstanding American Jewish novel of its generation. It should have been presented squarely as such. The handling of this book epitomized to me all that was apologetic in our consciousness as Jews, for omission is often as unhealthy as denial.

I had wrestled with this question all my life; I had tried omission in *Frankie and Johnny,* presenting black characters, and in "passing" my characters I had depersonalized them just as a human being in trying to "pass" depersonalizes himself. But in *Yehuda, The Golden Mountain,* and *The Old Bunch* I had found the clear way, working directly in the culture of my people.

I believed that I had attained an integration that would enable me henceforth to handle any material with greater freedom. I felt that I would be able to select material out of this freedom rather than from some inner pressure, just as a well-adjusted Jew feels more at ease in the cosmopolitan world than a Jew who is trying to hide or minimize his identity.

The three books represented a three-legged support of my Jewish psyche: *The Golden Mountain* was my connection with the traditional material in the past of my people, *The Old Bunch* represented my relationship to our present life, and *Yehuda* to what I considered the vital source of future Jewish culture. If I knew my relationship in these three ways, I was free, and could apply myself to subject matter in the open world.

For I have not meant in all this discussion to suggest that a Jew should not or could not write about anything but Jews, any more than I would contend that a Jew should live only amongst Jews. I had dealt with Poles, Irish, Jews in *The New Bridge* and had felt no constriction, and later in *Citizens,* I was to interrelate Mexicans, Negroes, Germans, and people of every derivation, for I felt I had lived through the self-realizational phase of the Jewish problem.

But though I felt integrated as a Jew I had yet to relate my Jewishness to the problems of our times in the world around me. This I realized through my unpleasant experience in the nudist colony and in my own uneasiness at having been identified as a Jew-radical in the suppression of *Model Tenement*. I needed to be able to engage in an activity without being particularly conscious of being a Jew. It was inevitable in those years that such an activity would be in the direction of socio-economic reform.

* * *

From the day I sat in the Reynolds library laboring through *Das Kapital*, I had considered myself in agreement with the equalitarian aims of Marxism, and from that day on I was confronted with the conscience question before every liberal mind in our generation: if you believe in economic equality, why don't you join the communists, meaning the Communist Party?

The gravitational pull toward the party was powerful. At times it seemed to me that most of my friends were members of the party, and at one period membership seemed to be regarded as a certificate of quality for serious young writers, and it was quite apparent that the party could "make" a young writer, especially in the field of social realism. Several of the writers persistently promoted in the left-wing press were talented, but one could also watch one mediocrity after another puffed into temporary literary eminence by the comrades. Indeed, for a period, talent was a secondary consideration.

I suppose that I was considered a fellow traveler, not too reliable. Once I was even asked to write an article for the *New Masses*.

Significantly, my earliest uneasiness about the Communist Party was connected with the Palestine question. In 1930, when the economic crash was catapulting American intellectuals into the communist ranks, I had returned from my third visit to Palestine; I had worked in a collective colony, and had listened



to the tales of some of the members who had escaped from Siberia where they had been sent because they were Zionists. Now, I suppose that I am not politically minded in the sense of following politics as an abstract science in which movable forces are applied at certain points at will. I realized that in the communist pattern, or patter, Zionism was an instrument of British imperialism and therefore to be opposed.

But was that reality? or was reality the life that existed in the land of Palestine? The only reality I felt capable of evaluating was the reality of the people I knew and of their lives. There in Palestine I had lived in a purely Marxist community, where all was possessed in common, where people labored in common for the common good. This system was, I imagined, similar to the Soviet way of life. It could not be said to represent all of Jewish Palestine, but it was a deeply felt and freely developing part of Jewish life there. And yet the Soviet Government regarded these people as sinister and prevented Jews in Russia from going to Palestine to live as socialists in their own culture.

In my view, I was a cultural Zionist, uncertain whether a full political nationhood was essential to the attainment of the Jewish home. I believed I saw in Palestine a cultural flowering that had already taken form without political nationhood, and since cultural autonomy was one of the Soviet tenets, I could not comprehend their opposition to the emigration of Jews to Palestine, where they could attain such autonomy.

There was of course the competitive Soviet territory for Jews in Biro-Bidjan, but since it was a Yiddish rather than a Hebrew culture that was being fostered there, I believed that the urge toward Palestine still had to be recognized by the Soviets as compatible with their own ideology.

Subsequently I learned that the world has not yet progressed to a point where a culture may be assured without statehood. And subsequently the Soviet Government proved a supporter of Israel, though Jews in Soviet territory were still prevented from furthering Zionism. But the partial change in Soviet policy did not erase the lesson of twenty years ago, when it appeared to me that the communist line on Palestine was evolved out of abstractions, out of rule-book calculations by people who had no real contact with the Jews or Arabs in Palestine. And I

therefore could not accept the illusion that these people, the communists, were first and basically moved by the welfare of the common people, and at the same time I feared a movement whose members had inflexibly to follow given judgements.

At that time in New York, my communist friends seemed sympathetic except when the question of Palestine came into the conversation. Then they spouted the party line, and accused me of being a Zionist. As the organized aspects of Zionism did not appeal to me, I was in all the dilemmas. There seemed to be no group in which I could work with a clear conscience. My disillusion with my radical friends came when one of them, after a brief visit to Palestine, returned and wrote a series of articles for the *Menorah Journal* proving incontrovertibly that Zionism could never succeed. I was intimidated by his brilliant display of logic and dialectics, but felt, deep down, that time would prove him wrong. And I felt that this same intimidation, induced by their self-assured omniscience, could lead to the acceptance of their dogma. I was spared from it by clinging to my own experiences, and yet, detached from these friends, I found myself in something of a void. I needed to participate, I was trying to make my new adjustment to America, the revolutionary spirit was dominant, and it seemed that all world problems including the Jewish and Palestine problems would be settled through social advance.

I joined, then, a group called New America, whose history is typical of a score of organizations that attracted non-communist progressives at this period.

New America had partly derived its origin from the fad for technocracy, then current. It had attracted people with something of my own scrupules—they hadn't been able to conform their ideas to any existing party. They believed that the Communist Party should not be attacked, but that nevertheless the truly progressive movement in America would have to come through indigenous channels. They believed that the class-struggle terminology was ineffective in America, that the pure Marxist concept was not applicable to the American scene, and that the American worker would not commit himself to that concept.

Actually, during the Browder united front, the communist line was often close to our New America line; in the last analysis



the difference was in the all-important factor of democratic independence of judgement, of source of control. Later, when war preparations began and communists swayed according to the Soviet Union's relationship with Germany, these differences brought the organizations into conflict.

At the time we joined New America, its ideal seemed to be realizable through a kind of super New Deal. In those days, intellectuals were flocking to become CIO organizers in order to have contact with the workers.

From the beginning, I sensed the basic weakness that was eventually to kill New America as it killed a whole succession of well-reasoned American progressive organizations. We were doomed to be a head without a body. The moment an American progressive group reached for mass support, it came into competition with the communists already in the field, and at that moment the communist organization smothered it.

In the steel mills and automobile unions there were a few CIO organizers, shop chairmen and even plain workers who adhered to New America. The climax of our activity was in the Little Steel strike and in the organization of the reaction to the Memorial Day massacre in Chicago. This was to be the basis of my novel, *Citizens.*

I felt from the beginning that I would one day write a novel about this strike, and I watched and took part in the struggle so that I might be able to present the whole view of a strike as a social phenomenon.

At the time, the success of the steelworkers' union seemed crucial for the entire structure of the CIO, and therefore to the march of liberalism which, to many, had assumed the character of a peaceful revolution. But if the steelworkers' union could be broken by the smaller mills, the large steel combines would follow, and the entire pyramid of great new unions would collapse.

One of the union organizers, Mel, was in the periphery of our group, and he kept us informed of the approach of the strike. Mel himself was considered a "college boy" organizer, and therefore distrusted by some of the more experienced leaders; it was even rumored that he was a Trotskyite.

Actually he was a young man with journalistic and literary ambitions; later, like the radical intellectuals who turned to

*Fortune*, he became the labor editor of *Business Week*, and the author of personality portraits of labor leaders for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

When the strike broke out, a few of us from New America drove to the field headquarters to find out if we could help. The union had taken over a deserted, dilapidated beerhall a few blocks from the plant. It was a rambling shack in an area of vacant lots, and in the dark barren interior we helped set up a soup kitchen, and we got a friend of ours, Dr. Lawrence Jacques, to put some first aid equipment in a closet.

The strike tension mounted. There was constant police interference with the picket line, and when a mass picketing demonstration was scheduled for Memorial Day, it was widely predicted that the police would shoot into the crowd. Violence was so well anticipated that on the morning of Memorial Day swarms of press photographers and newsreel trucks were on the scene to record the clash.

The social forces in Chicago had been completely polarized by the strike. All the liberal groups were around the CIO, and the fascist organizations were disseminating anti-union literature. One could have called the strike a showdown between communist and fascist forces, but the lines of control are never that clear. In a long book, later, I tried to trace them down; one could never be certain that it was an actual command from an organized fascist source that caused the police to fire, any more than it was a communist command that made the strikers march. Actually, the isolated fact of responsibility for detonation is trivial. Once the two forces faced each other, the detonation was inevitable.

On the morning of Memorial Day, several of us came to the headquarters. Larry brought a few splints along in order to be "ready for anything," as he imagined he might have to take care of a broken arm or two as well as some clubbed skulls. We tried to round up cars to serve as ambulances in case of trouble.

Who were "we"? We were a half-dozen individuals, acceptable to the strike organizers as volunteer aids; some of them knew us as friends of Mel, one or two knew us through contact with more important members of New America. In the same way, there were communist volunteers on hand, busy with banners and pamphlets, and there were Trotskyites selling their



paper—it was a field day for agents to the masses. There were also observers from a liberal churchmen's league, and representatives from the Civil Liberties Union: and on the other side there were no doubt Silver Shirts and followers of Gerald Smith.

As the morning progressed, more and more tales of the ugly temper of the police drifted to the strike headquarters, and finally as the march was being formed there came definite warnings, "They'll shoot, it'll be a massacre!"

And here at the moment of action was the moral problem. Because we knew there was likely to be a massacre, should we retreat, desist? Suppose we were indeed certain that people would be killed in the march? Was it our duty to prevent the march?

No formula has ever solved this problem. In a certain moment before every violence the question arises. But in many occasions, such as the one that confronted us, the problem scarcely exists outside of the mind, for reality has a propulsion of its own. The people had come there to make the march, and the march would take place either in organized fashion or in little jeering waves.

Soon the flagbearing head of the procession moved across the scraggly industrial wasteland toward the plant; we fell in alongside.

There is a courage in a march of this kind, different from war. For in war the soldier, armed, progresses most often into a field whose condition is doubtful; the enemy may even prove to have retreated. But in this kind of civil strife people walk without arms into contact with a line of armed men standing directly before them.

The procession flattened, spreading as it came against the fence. The marchers were at arm's length from the police. For some moments the two forces remained face to face. The tension held.

I walked in and out, weaving through the line of people, hearing the little jeering colloquies, the shouted slogans. For a time it seemed as though the struggle might dissipate in an exchange of insults.

The actual instant of conflagration is never known for sure. Each side always says the other side fired first. But suddenly the

little explosions came, like a chain of firecrackers, and everyone was running back across the field, and the little explosions continued. I ran with the others, still imagining the firing was in the air, and pausing at instants to look back to fix the picture in my mind. The second time I paused there was a little boy just near me, about ten years old, holding the hand of his father as he ran. The father was a barrel-chested man, wearing Sunday clothes. The child seemed to stumble; he let out a wail and began to hop. He was shot in the foot. His father picked him up, still running, and I ran alongside; presently the father was winded; I took the kid and ran, carrying him; soon I was winded; we still heard occasional shots behind us. Some of our ambulance cars had driven onto the field, and I stopped one and put the boy in it. The firing had ceased; some of us returned onto the field and began to pick up the crumpled and fallen.

Then I was back in headquarters. The interior was now utterly dark, for the few windows were blocked by the milling confused stream of people who surged through the room seeking friends or relatives amongst the wounded. And all the while, wounded were being carried in and placed bleeding on the floor where they squirmed to keep from under the feet of the crowd.

The best Larry could do was to examine them as they were brought in, and to see that the serious cases got taken first to the hospitals. I stumbled around trying to help him, gathering volunteers to move the wounded, some of whom lay doubled with their hands to their bellies. And still more people were limping in, and being carried in, until there were scores with bullet wounds, and uncounted broken heads. I loaded up our car and drove to the hospital. There was a shortage of doctors and nurses, for this was a holiday. I came back for blood transfusion volunteers.

Later in the afternoon I was in a hospital with Larry as he operated. I saw the torn insides from a man's belly, saw the perforated bits of gut being snipped away, the ends sewn together, heard Larry say he would probably not make it, saw another body on the table, and another.

The number of dead mounted until there were ten.

We had put ourselves into this, and now we knew what it was. Were we only well-meaning meddlers, or was it possible for citizens to act effectively in a struggle of this kind? We had



seen people killed needlessly, police had fired at their backs out of fright or brutality, or was it out of a natural law of such conflict?

There is a common idea that social progress comes through revulsion. There is supposed to be progress after a war because of the revulsion of the participants; the war acts as a purge, and then the better forces in our natures are supposed to assert themselves in a striving to reorganize human society so that there will be a greater degree of justice, preventing future wars. And the same sentiment is felt in a strike situation; after the bloodshed there is shame, and the good citizens must impose their wills so that the rights of the workers are observed.

Then our part in Chicago on that day was to utilize the public revulsion against the brutality of the police, to channelize it toward the common good. We acted immediately, out of rage.

I wrote an eyewitness leaflet calling for a citizens' investigation of the massacre. The call was signed by Larry and myself and a few other New Americans. In the next few days I hurried around town seeing community leaders of every type.

The massacre had been one of the most flagrant in American labor history, and there were few refusals to our call. We organized a committee which was perhaps the oddest united-front group ever established in Chicago, embracing churchmen and conservative unionists, communists and Trotskyites, poets and professors. I became the chairman. We scheduled a mass meeting with the immediate object of ending police violence in strikes.

One hall was refused; we secured the opera house.

We planned for our meeting to be a documentation of the event rather than a series of indignant speeches. All the newsreels of the massacre had been suppressed, and the public was being saturated with the conventional press stories about "strikers' violence." The newspapers carried pages of photographs of the event, with lurid captions about strikers attacking police; a picture under such a caption was just as likely to show a policeman bringing down his club on a prostrate woman. And yet, so powerful is the suggestion of the written word, that the general impression carried away by the casual mass was what the caption told them to see, rather than what the photographs showed.

I clipped out the pictures, without their captions, and arranged them in time sequence; they made a complete pictorial record of the event, from the start of the march to the dead in the hospitals. I had slides made from these clippings.

Scarcely a line of advance publicity about our meeting was printed in the newspapers. Nevertheless the auditorium was filled and crowds milled on the streets.

Larry had prepared a medical report proving that nearly all the wounded were shot from behind. We brought several carfuls of wounded from hospitals and homes, to testify before the public.

The press had suggested that the demonstrators were not striking steelworkers but communists who had nothing to do with the mills. While there had been observers like ourselves, we, together with whatever communists and other politicals were present, represented only a handful in the crowd. Now, one after another of the wounded hobbled onto the stage to be interrogated by an official of the Civil Liberties Union. They came on crutches, or leaning on the shoulders of their relatives, or in wheelchairs. Each gave his name and address.

— Occupation?

— Open-hearth man in the Republic mill.

And, "Roller in the Republic mill," and, "Housewife, my husband works in the mill, he's on strike."

We read the roll of the dead; all but one were steelmill workers.

With each added bit of testimony one could feel the fever mounting in the hall. But the most terrible moment came with the showing of the pictures. We turned out the lights; a screen was lowered. We explained that the newsreels were still suppressed but that we had a pictorial record nevertheless. And the photographs succeeded each other on the screen.

I stood below, reciting the commentary. So strange a roar arose that it seemed to me as though the vast auditorium was a cauldron of rage, overturning upon me. As one picture flashed after another, I became terrified; I felt I could never control this crowd, they would burst through the doors, rush out and burn the city hall—the impact of the pictures was so enraging. I was simply afraid of the naked revolutionary urge of the crowd. In that instant I experienced the full sense of the danger of power,



for I felt that a few words would have unleashed violence beyond what we had seen on Memorial Day.

"Go faster," I urged the operator, so as to reduce the impact of the photographs. At last it was over and the lights were on.

If during my life as a writer I had felt a lack of contact with people, I knew it at that moment, I knew it for the verification that we all need at times in our lives, I knew that what was in myself was in them all. If I had sometimes felt unincluded as a stranger, artist and Jew, I knew that universal action exists. And even in this moment I felt that perhaps one of the reasons for the social reformism of the Jew is the need to melt himself into these movements that engulf his own problem.

Our meeting served to keep the outrage before the nation. The Senate's investigations of violations of civil liberties were taking place; much of what we presented on the stage of the opera house was repeated in Washington before the La Follette committee. The most effective testimony proved to be Larry's. The night before our departure for Washington we spread out medical charts on the floor of his apartment, and on the human silhouettes we traced the paths of the police bullets. For it seems that a horror that everyone knew about could best be proven by a medical chart, rear view, riddled, contrasted against an almost blank front view.

After the Senate hearing there was a counterhearing in Chicago in an attempt to whitewash the police. Larry Jacques was put on the stand.

"Wasn't your name changed from Jacobson?" the police attorney insisted. (It wasn't.)

I was startled to find the classic fascist trick so openly attempted here. And this incident was to have an important reverberation in my novel about the strike.

On the surface it seemed to me that I might have taken part in the strike only to got material for a novel, and this was humiliating. But it is a tragedy of our society that the artist is more and more segregated; he is likely to be a part of the community only in his youth, before he "goes away to become an artist", and it is perhaps for this reason that the best work of our writers so often deals with their youth. When we want to participate in the life of our times we have to put ourselves into it, volitionally,

and we fear that our motives are false and that we are utilizing the suffering of others.

Certainly there was in our effort in Chicago something of the satisfaction of a show well put on. That is one of the gruesome truths about social art—we are after all ghouls, we go through strikes and wars, we organize the blood, and we write war novels and plays and we make films out of its flow. But it is also true that we are moved to expose evil and thereby to lead people to acts of conscience.

Could we say that there was any result to our effort in Chicago? Did it prove that the action of citizens could be effective? The police had a bad time of it in Washington, yes, but I imagine that within the Chicago regime they were congratulated for the front they had put up before those New Deal radicals. They were perhaps told to go a little easy on the trigger with strikers in the future.

In totality, the public's sense of responsibility may have been pushed a notch forward. For a while unionism was unhampered. Some of the fascists and some of the Jew-baiters were given pause. There are no clear, final victories. Some years later the people elected one of our committee's most active members, Paul Douglas, to the Senate, certainly not only because of what he had done in connection with the Memorial Day massacre, yet what he did then went into the liberalizing stream.

* * *

The strike hearings in Washington were over. I did not feel ready as yet to work on the material; a distance of time was needed. It was in this year that Spain was nearing its last agony. Already, all the liberal circles revolved around committees and organizations to save Spain, and every week there were cause parties and collection meetings, and in every one of us there was the thought: the future is being decided in Spain, why am I not there?

For me, there was still another call; at the other end of the Mediterranean the same struggle was taking place; the same



people who were backing Franco were paying for the campaign of Arab terror being carried out by mercenary infiltrees into Palestine.

And in those days we rather simply thought that if the good people of the world could be made to know the truth behind what was happening, they would stop the fascists before the gangsters were strong enough to make war against us all. In those days it even seemed as though writers and journalists could arouse the people and prevent the spread of war. And just then, there seemed to be a specific opportunity for me in a new magazine being planned by Melvin Morris.

Our offices had been moved up to the penthouse and it was rumored that the whole building was going to be called Paradise. Morris's own office had windows on three sides, overlooking all of Chicago. Around the walls, below the windows, was a constantly changing exhibit of sexy babe drawings, set out for a judicious squint. One morning I noticed that instead of the babes there were Gropper cartoons all around the walls.

"Ever see anything like that?" Morris demanded. "There's a guy who's got what it takes. Been drawing for some little radical papers. I'm going to discover him!"

Besides Gropper, he had found a few other talented cartoonists in a paper called *The New Masses*, and he had discovered several obscure writers such as George Seldes, John Spivak, and an Englishman named Claude Cockburn who had the inside dope about everything.

Now, take their *New Masses*. What was their circulation? Maybe twenty thousand, tops. Those lefties had no idea how to promote a magazine.—People will go for some of that stuff, if you bring it to them! Excitedly, my boss began to expound—a magazine for the people! Big articles about medical care for all, about how unions and employers could co-operate, big exposés of the Silver Shirts, the Bund!—Where had all this come from?

Then I was told of the Breakfast. Morris had been touched by the Roosevelt magic. He was dreaming of a liberal magazine. He had the flair to sense that the country was ripe for it. A magazine against prejudice, a magazine that would pick up the great mass circulation the unions could provide, a magazine to ride on the people's enthusiasm for the New Deal. Why, it was a natural,

and no one had thought of it! Here was the formula to steal away *Time* and *Life* readers in one fell swoop!

What was the juice, the appeal of *Time?* It was omniscience—the sense that the magazine had the inside information about everything. Good. The new magazine would be edited from that angle—the inside angle. Exposés would be featured. A terrific exposé of Jap spying was already on the way, and there would be a series about Nazi intrigues, the Bund, the Coughlinites—John Spivak had all the inside material. Next, what was the appeal of *Life?* Pictures. Therefore the new magazine would have a big photo section. And pictures and text would be spiced with sex.

*Time* and *Life* required a mammoth staff, correspondents on high salaries and expenses all over the world. Yet there was a way to get the best material, the inside inside stuff for practically nothing. Take all the foreign correspondents—every one of them had a story he was itching to tell but which no publication dared print. For a nominal price, without having to keep writers on the payroll or cover their travelling expenses, one could obtain the best material.

It was a variation of the *Paradise* formula : there was good material without a market, that could be had cheaply. Among those lefties were the cleverest cartoonists, the wittiest writers, the sharpest reporters, all with material they were aching to get before a mass public.

So *Paradise* was a kike outfit, eh? Those New York operators would learn a thing or two! Within a year there would be only one big name in the magazine field ; Melvin Morris!

At that moment my boss seemed to me again like myself, a kid from the west side who had the bitter wound, the ineradicable wound, and whose deepest motivation, in spite of worldly experience, came from that hurt. Certainly it was wrong, certainly it was a motivation that had to be controlled, channeled, it was no good if it was just a revenge motivation, but the energy streamed from that source. Morris wanted to slap and dazzle the world to prove that a Jew was no kike, and for the time being he understood some of the problems that were involved with his cause; in the framework of fighting anti-Semitism, in the urge in his own heart to assert his wrath against a superior gentile



world he was a citizen, a human being who saw the linked injustices of our civilization.

I will say here that I presume that the publisher of *Time* had no anti-Semitic tendencies. But yet I know that during the period in question I myself as a reader was often puzzled by what I felt to be consistent innuendos in that magazine. I know that this question was discussed in Jewish circles, and that some sensitive Jewish readers were then apprehensive of this magazine. And I believe that it is a matter of public interest, beyond the private lives of either publisher, to record so important a motivation in Melvin Morris, a motivation that deeply affected the editorial policy of a magazine that had a great potential influence in America.

This, then, was the conception of *Inside*. I wondered whether Morris figured that he was using the communists, or whether they figured they were using him. But in the high days of the united front, it really seemed possible that such a combination could succeed.

The appearance of *Inside* was set for the following spring. I asked if I could go to Spain, Palestine, and Russia to prepare material.

Even as I arranged to go as a journalist to Spain I wondered whether there could be any reality in fighting other than with a gun. I was sidling toward the battle, frightened, undecided.

* * *

In the plane from Paris to Valencia there was only one other passenger, a man with a strong, patient face who introduced himself as Del Vayo, the foreign minister of the elected government of Spain. He was returning from a last futile plea before the League of Nations.

At dusk, we drove in a slow convoy from Valencia to Madrid, amidst the trucks that fed the city—a hullucinating ride that was to be repeated a decade later from Tel Aviv to beleaguered Jerusalem. In Madrid, we were taken to the reception center for touring foreign sympathizers, the Hotel Regina, where we met an

American congressman and his wife, a visiting member of the Swedish parliament, and an international assortment of liberal writers. We began to encounter Americans from the International Brigade. We went to a press conference and met a turbulent, confident Loyalist general, and Hemingway, and Martha Gellhorn, the incarnation of the Hemingway heroine. Hemingway promised to take us to the Madrid front.

That night we experienced our first shelling. When the usual bombardment began, a few Americans dashed to the front windows to watch the show, together with a Danish correspondent who was all tricked out in military garb, including leather puttees. I made an irritated speech about pointless exposure being troublesome to those who were fighting the war. And yet I wondered whether I wasn't just scared. I knew that this am-I-a-coward preoccupation was the self-probing device of the Hemingway era, and I felt that we should come to more fundamental questions than that of personal physical cowardice. It was to take a bigger war to bring us there.

When we went through the trenches around the university, with Hemingway, we crawled up to a machinegun post in a half-shattered coachhouse, and there a hospitable militiaman offered to let us each fire a burst. I squirm a little in reporting this. But it was our chance to "fire at the fascists". I fired. The congressman who was with us hesitated because such an act, becoming known, might "provoke an international incident". However, he finally gave way to temptation.

The front was stabilized, with only occasional short exchanges of fire. In one of the trenches a Spaniard had installed a slot machine to help while away the watch. Later, we passed through a trench that suddenly petered out into a mudtrack—our guide had mistaken his way. We made a one-by-one dash across a space that was open to enemy observation. As we ducked behind a wooden paling, a few bullets dented the planks above our heads. Then we got out of there to a commandpost where positions were explained on a detail map.

I have repeated this frontline procedure many times since then, in the Spanish war and in the big war and in Palestine. The routine is always embarrassing because the visitor knows that the men who are stationed there cannot help feeling resentful of his privilege of coming—and going away. It is also embarrassing



because the visitor knows that unusual movement can attract enemy fire. But in the curious testimonial place of the writer in modern warfare, this has become the conventional pattern of observation. He has to smell, to see a little, and he has to go away to testify. Even if he doubts himself for not being a participant, he cannot dent the argument in his own mind that public opinion can be of greater importance than the presence of one more man in an army.

This was the period when every effort was being made to raise the United States arms embargo. It was one of the tottering balance points in modern history, for the decision was terribly close in Washington. Many stories have been heard of utmost pressures that nearly succeeded one night in raising the embargo, to be counteracted by greater rightist pressures in the morning. And it was reasonable then to imagine that every firsthand report, every true-ringing story of the struggle of the Spanish people was of value, for arms were needed, more than men.

It seems to me that I am still apologizing a little for not having remained to fight in Spain. For there is the confrontation of the ghost of John Lardner, who also came as a correspondent and remained to fight and to die, and whose action had greater value than anything he could have written. Yet the war was already lost, when he died. In the last analysis we cannot bargain with history, cannot weigh a life against a grain of moral effect on the side of the righteous. We do what we feel we have to do.

During our weeks in Spain, I don't believe this debate ever quieted within me. The presence of American boys, many Jewish, fellows like myself, some young writers among them, drew me constantly toward participation. More than once, at the moment of leaving a front we had toured, I felt a profound pull just to sit down and say, Okay, I'm staying. Yet beneath all doubt was the bitter, realistic argument: You know the war is lost. You know that no matter what we do the embargo won't be lifted and that in a matter of months the fascists will win. This battle is lost; the big fight is still to come; don't throw yourself away in a lost cause.

And more. This was late in the struggle, and there were veterans with desolation deep in their eyes, the ones who dropped

a phrase, a sour word of disillusion as they scented the fever in me. "Don't do it."

And most tragic of all was the schism already deep between the communists and the anarchists and the Trotskyites. Their mutual denunciations poisoned the atmosphere, and everywhere there was dark talk of hidden deeds, assassinations and atrocities. It was to some degree the end quarrel in every defeat, when the exhausted fighters turn upon each other. But we who weren't communists felt that the situation was not altogether in the light, and that we might be enlisting in a battle that was other than what we thought it to be. It was a feeling partly grained with dishonor at having such a feeling, for the big fact remained immutable: this was the battle against fascism, nothing else should count; and yet the other feeling was there for those of us with the tragic obsession of the overscrupulous.

There were vitriolic excoriations. Dos Passos, of course, was described as having "gone bad." Yes, we knew that meant he was considered on the anarchist side; but hadn't he come to Spain with the same pure motives as Hemingway, hadn't he lain under fire with him in a room from which part of *The Spanish Earth* was filmed? We could understand that in war there had to be one discipline; but yet the wound was there; we couldn't believe Dos Passos to be a man of evil, and we felt we could no longer tell what was true, what was necessary.

The night before we were to leave Spain, I still wrestled with my doubts. What could I write about Spain that Hemingway was not writing more effectively? As for *Inside,* it would succeed just as well without my presence. Every individual could rationalize himself out of a war. I should stay.

Then a final personal factor entered. My wife was pregnant. Yes, plenty of fighting men had left pregnant wives, and little children, but this weighed. At least, I felt, I had to tear myself out of the atmosphere of Spain, the proximity of war that tended to draw one in as by an undertow. Perhaps I would get a clearer view of the war and myself from outside.

As we walked into a village on the French side, we hurried into the first restaurant and devoured a huge omelette. The innkeeper stood by, smiling indulgently. "Well, and how long were you there, fighting?" he asked.

I felt guilty.



In Paris, I tried to find out whether our visas for Russia had arrived; there was only moody indifference at the Intourist Bureau. I waited a week, meanwhile writing about Spain, even of the people in Madrid seeing the same movies over and over. This is one of the things that happens to a reporter in long years—not a loss of values, but a peculiar and perhaps saving ability to give comparative trivialities their due attention and value, to be interested in detail even in the face of grandeur.

Meanwhile another idea had begun to nag me. I had thought of a way to combine my compulsion to serve in the war with my writer's function. I wanted to become part of the International Brigade long enough to absorb its character, to take part in action, so that I might write a short book that could yet appear in time to have some effect.

I would have to be attached to the Brigade for a limited period. But in modern times one no longer fixed the period of one's service in war. The terribleness of war was that one went in without a back door open. Therefore my project was in a sense a weasel. Wasn't it a way to salve my conscience, while prearranging an honorable desertion?

In the end I decided that my idea was a valid one even if it represented a compromise within myself. I looked up Louis Fischer at the Hotel Lutetia; he was acting in some nonofficial way as a liaison man on the Spanish question. Fischer was enthusiastic about my project; he believed a book about the Brigade could still do good. Yes, I should return to Spain and write the book. He gave me a few notes to people who could arrange to attach me to the International Brigade for this purpose.

We went in this time on foot with huge knapsacks loaded with sausages and cigarettes. And then began the chase from Barcelona to Valencia to Madrid to Albacete in an effort to implement my mission. No one seemed to have authority to accept me into the Brigade as a writer. At last I was sent to an officer in Albacete, a little town crawling with internationals in the process of being mobilized or demobilized.

My papers kept being delayed. I suppose the real question was whether a writer not subject to Communist Party discipline could be trusted on so intimate a mission at that stage of the war. Even today there is a reticence as to the degree of party control in the Loyalist ranks. Had there been assistance from the democratic nations to the Loyalists in the early phases of the war, I don't believe that the question of communist control could have arisen. But as the Russians seemed to be the only people committed to Loyalist aid, the war in its later phases came to represent a battle between communism and fascism, or rather between Russian and German controls. The factors leading now toward a third world war were already considered at that time, and the diplomacy of the democratic nations seemed to be fixed on the issue of a third war, rather than on a prevention of the second. All those whose hearts were torn by the plight of the Spanish Loyalists tried to push out of their minds the consciousness of a calculation made as though fascism no longer existed. But today's dilemma was already there. And I suspected this as the deciding issue in my own project, though I imagined that I could carry out my project and write my book within the area of human good will, writing only of men who had volunteered in a fight for justice.

Everyone assured me that the proper papers would be made out for me, that the officer in charge was away, and then it seemed that I had been sent through the wrong channel, I should have been sent through the American section; I found the American section and haunted a young communist who slept on the floor of the tiny office and spent his days intriguing to get himself assigned to the front. He told me bluntly that he would not affix me to the Brigade, with the idea I had in mind. The only man who could authorize the matter was Robert Minor. He thought Minor was in Madrid.

I bummed a truckride that night and reached Madrid. I went to the Hotel Florida to ask Hemingway's help. *To Have And Have Not* had just appeared, and Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn were sitting on the bed grinning over his picture on the cover of *Time*. As for my problem, Bob Minor was not in Madrid but I could probably find him at a certain hospital on the way to Valencia. They offered me a packet of cookies for the journey. I truck-hitched the rest of the night, and caught up with Minor early



in the morning, on the road. We shared the last can of Vienna sausage in my pack, and Minor gave me a note to a colonel in Albacete. This time I received permission to stay with the International Brigade for several weeks. I went off on a supply truck to a hilltop village where a unit of the Lincoln Brigade was bivouacked.

That the men needed rest was all too obvious; they had the look of fatal indifference after long, long weariness. Only idealism sustained them, and some by now had lost their passion and were like wornout soldiers in any war, and some had lost their morale and grumbled about the number of consecutive days the Internationals had been in line as compared to Spanish units, and how the Brigade was always sacrificed; their nerves were shredded; it was near the end.

At noon one day there was a brief commotion in front of the church that served as messhall. Someone had leaped onto a table; he was complaining about the food, about everything; there was a little surge around the table and order was restored. That night as I slept in the room next to the commander's office, I heard the trial going on; for a long time the commander walked back and forth in the little room, talking. He was a very young man himself, Lincolnesque in build and bearing, but with a Southern drawl. His talk now was perplexedly slow, and for a long time he kept exposing his own soul, "Here I am your commander, and we came here in this kind of a war, and now I've got to punish you for demoralizing the men. I'm trying not to let myself be influenced by sentiment, but I can't go exactly by the military rules; in any other war maybe you would be shot for what you did, urging men to sedition. But I know what you've been through... I can't go by my feelings either."

In the end, the prisoner was sentenced to a period of hard labor.

Just before the end of the war, the same commander was killed in action. I remember reading a wonderfully touching letter from his mother, that appeared in the newspapers.

During the week in that village, one could feel the men's spirits regaining strength; their interest became awake, and they asked about things at home, the steel strike, what had happened there in Chicago. A few of the men even talked of war actions

in which they had taken part, talking now with more than the terse "Remember Guadaharama, that was a bitch," which serves for communication with one's comrades.

The days were bright and easy; a group of Finns labored carrying rocks for a steambath. Personalities began to emerge; I felt I was approaching what I needed.

A company of Spanish conscripts were being trained for integration with the Brigade, and I trailed along with a subaltern from Brooklyn who taught them marksmanship. In a neighboring field, a peasant was at his ploughing, stunted and hard-gnarled as though made of the same wood as his plowhandles, and indifferent to all this that was for him.

As I watched the target practice, the kid from Brooklyn offered me a try. I lay with the rifle, squirming my body against the earth in the way that men have of fitting themselves to the soil before shooting. My score was fair. As I gave back the rifle all my doubts were again awake. The next day there was a rumor that the unit would soon re-enter action. The local commander told me I had better report to Brigade headquarters for permission to go along.

The staff headquarters was a few miles away in a pretty little chateau. There was a press attaché in a garret room, turning out something on a mimeograph. I knew his name from *The New Masses*. He tried to arrange my stay through the coming action, but suddenly the camp became energized; the brigade was moving; I was called to the commander's office and told I'd have to leave within an hour. It was an order.

Again, in Barcelona, I talked with several boys who were already close friends in the quick understandings of war. Stronger than ever I felt that atmosphere of doubt that so marred the Spanish war at the close, and that was in itself a dreadful result of the long, unequal struggle.

I decided to go on to Palestine.

In all my life I have never been so perplexed in an action, and I could not help feeling that a vast number of people had the same perplexity about Spain. In my own case I felt in the last analysis that what pulled me to remain was still the fear of going away out of corwardice, rather than a clear impulse to fight things out in this land. I could risk my neck just as well in



Palestine, where I had a sense of personal involvement. But like all my generation I suppose I never had an entirely clear conscience about Spain.

* * *

This was the period of "Arab disorder" and "Jewish self-restraint" in Palestine. The Arab campaign consisted of daily attacks on the scattered colonies, of ambushes on isolated roads. The Jewish reply was vigilance; attacks were repulsed, but there were no counter-attacks. The Haganah, on guard at all points, had decided on the policy of self-restraint because the Arab aggressions were not regarded as an expression of the Arab people. The attacks were systematically carried out by bands of marauders who had filtered into Palestine from Syria. Their chief was Fawzi El Kawakji, a Syrian adventurer who was said on good authority to be receiving money, supplies, and advice from fascist sources. Fawzi was to reappear in the invasion of 1947.

For some years after the troubles of 1929 there had been comparative peace in Palestine. During these years, the wave of German-Jewish immigration had taken place. Hitler's first escapees had been permitted to take their household goods out of the country with them in boxcar-sized "lifts" which could now be seen scattered amongst the settlements, with doors and windows cut in their sides. Huge black letters still named the cities from which they had come: Berlin, Magdeburg, Koln.

But the quiet years had passed. The Mufti had made his links in Europe, and the troubles began again, not in the form of mass attacks by religious fanatics, but in the form of hit and run attacks by Fawzi's mercenaries, who had been promised pay, loot, Jewish women, and the privilege of murdering Jews.

Certain villages were used as gathering points. The local Arabs of course could not refuse hospitality; besides, there were always some among them who hated Jews, some who found the campaign profitable and exciting, and some who were sincerely nationalistic. To betray the raiders was to betray fellow-Arabs to foreigners, and the sentiment of any people would be against such an act. Indeed, there is a human tendency to give refuge

to outlaws of any kind, and for all these reasons, it was difficult to put an end to the raids. The British, moreover, seemed not at all eager to hamper Fawzi's men.

But as the murders increased the government was compelled to increase the number of Jewish settlement police—an armed supplementary force drawn from amongst the colonists themselves. And in the third year of the raids, when Fawzi's fascist connections had become all too clear, when the Mufti's campaign was all too plainly a German move to soften up British control in the Near East in preparation for the great war—only then were the Wingate night squads organized to break up the raiding bands.

With commando volunteers from the settlements, who later formed the nucleus of the noted Palmach striking force, Wingate rapidly drove Fawzi El Kawakji's bands up into the northern Galilee hills and back into Syria.

The Mufti fled Palestine, eventually to take up residence as a guest of Julius Streicher on his farm near Nuremberg. Several of the leaders of the Mufti's party were exiled from Palestine, but shortly after the war the British permitted them to return.

When I arrived in Palestine at the end of 1937 the Arab disorders were at their height. There was little movement around the country as travel had become quite dangerous. In every settlement I heard tales of all-night raids repulsed, saw the graves of recent dead.

It was during this period that the plan for overnight construction of new settlements was invented. As one saw them with their stockades and their central watchtowers, one again thought of early American settlements stockaded against the Indians. The revolving searchlights on the towers seemed the only modern advance.

In the space of a week, I had seen the war-to-come in its testing stages in the two countries, Spain and Palestine. In this decade these lands were to serve as a gruesome parenthesis, the prelude and the afterlude for the big campaign in Europe. In 1937 it was still possible to imagine that forewarnings might be of use. I wrote of what I saw, and others wrote the same



warnings. The great cataclysms never come without foresigns, and our helplessness, our sense of being so feeble is only increased by our awareness of these signs.

Despite the state of undeclared warfare and the efforts to strangle the settlements, the Yishuv was proliferating, in the last phase of the boom brought on by the German immigrants. The town of Nathanyah where I had planted a grove some years before was an example of this rapid development; there were several paved streets, even a scattering of villas, with a veritable boom in town and seashore real estate in progress.

Oddly, I found my friend Yitzhak Chizik living there. Upon completion of his studies, Yitzhak had been pressed by Jewish leaders to enter the British administrative service; at the moment he was supervisor of the district of Nathanyah. He told me of fabulous prices paid for building lots in the center of the town, and how one of the first settlers had gone half-mad because he had sold his land before the values rose. It sounded a little like a Florida boom; there was no reason to have expected that only idealistic motives should find expression in the development of Palestine.

I beheld my grove at last in full-grown state. All through the depression I had managed to send money for its upkeep, and last season there had been a first crop, but Arab vandals had destroyed it, and they had also burned my packing shed. This year as I arrived I was greeted with news of a local hailstorm which had ruined half my crop. Alas, my dreams of sometime living here in modest ease and writing epics on the proceeds from my grove were like the dreams of all genteel buyers of chicken farms in New Jersey and little ranches in California. There was just then a glut of oranges on the market because of the too-rapid expansion of the citrus industry, and many groves were being abandoned. So I crammed myself with oranges during my week in Nathanyah, as the sole return of my seven-year investment.

I stayed with Chizik in a flat which he shared with the British chief of police for the district, a young man who was the epitome of the bored colonial. His room was devoid of books or any other sign of interest in human activities. One day I

went out with him on his rounds as paymaster for the Jewish settlement police in the area. In each village, the Jewish boys lined up smartly, each lad advancing in turn to receive his bit of pay from the hand of the ruling Briton, then performing the ritual Thank you, Sir, the smart salute, the about-face, and march away. The entire story of imperial reign was in this silly little ceremony—the British hand collecting money from a people and doling out part of it to them again for their own services in their own protection. In some countries, the British contribution as a nation expert in the business of government was probably valuable, but I couldn't help seeing, as the British couldn't help seeing, that every Jewish boy who marched up and thanked his chief for his pay considered himself an individual of higher development than the little colonial policeman. There were Jewish heads fermenting with theories, ideas, ambitions, and resentments, and to them the hand of the Briton was the very hand that impeded their country's development.

American pioneers had arrived at last, and they were just setting up their kibbutz at Ain Hashofet, on a hill isolated in an Arab district in central Palestine. The nearest neighboring colony was Mishmar Haemek. I went out from Mishmar one dawn to a spot where some wagonruts forked off the main road, and there I was met by a wagon going to Ain Hashofet. In it sat a settlement policeman—a gaffir— holding his rifle, and next to him sat a girl holding a bunch of cuttings for their garden. A light drizzle was falling. We rode up to the settlement which was temporarily housed in an abandoned old Arab structure, thick-walled and fortress-like, atop the hill. On the roof was the big searchlight.

The group consisted of idealist youngsters mostly from the New York area, and I realized that ten years before I would have been one of them. On the long table of their dim main room, they spread out the plans for their colony; under the shaft of light from the single small window we went over the plans, and they showed me how their rows of cottages would be arranged to catch the breeze, on one side of the yard, and the prevailing wind would blow away the barnsmells from the sheep and cowsheds on the other side, and the children's houses



would be placed in a section that could be expanded, a new house every year.

Just now, things were a little bit difficult. Below, on the other side of the hill, was an Arab village that served as a roundup point for Fawzi's men. So much time had to be lost, standing guard; and there had been a couple of attacks. The hill was all covered with stones and they needed their time for clearing the fields. And they wanted to begin work on their permanent quarters. And they wanted to build a road, in place of the wagonruts. There was so much to do—And what about Spain, they asked intently, how were things going in Spain?

When I had to leave, one of them shyly brought out a book for me to sign. It was a copy of *Yehuda.* "Do you know," he said, "this is our guidebook. We used to hold long debates, using it for a text, when we were still in training in New Jersey. We used to take up the problems of kibbutz life, the problem of the talented individual, the problem of privacy, the problem of theft in a communal settlement—we even dramatized chapters of your book."

And I had thought *Yehuda* was a book utterly lost.

The secretary of the kibbutz walked down with me to show me a short cut to Mishmar Haemek, across the fields and through a woods. It was safe, just then, he said, as they had made a compact with the Arabs on that side.

A few weeks later he was ambushed on the same path and killed.

Curiously, I felt no inner demand to stay, as I had felt in Spain. This was a long struggle in which I was, in my own way, doing my part.

Before leaving Palestine I stopped at my old place, Yagur. But I could not recognize the settlement. Rows of concrete dwellings had sprung up around the old cabins. And in the midst of the yard rose a magnificent modern dining and assembly hall, the most imposing structure to be found in any of the kibbutzim. It was just being completed, and I saw a squat, familiar figure laying stones on the wide stairway leading to the entrance of the building; it was Weismann.

Several of the old comrades gathered around me and began to relate the changes that had taken place in the years since I had left Yagur. This was no longer a small kibbutz but one of the largest in Palestine; instead of a hundred souls there were now nearly a thousand inhabitants. Yagur had become a combination industrial and farm collective. The kibbutz operated the local busline to Haifa, it operated a pottery and a small textile plant; a considerable number of the men of Yagur worked in the nearby cement factory and others worked in the Haifa port.

This new dininghall had been designed by a chavar who had been put through a course of study at the Technicum in Haifa.

I asked for Yehuda. They pointed out his quarters in one of the new dwellings, and I caught sight of him hurrying up the stairs, just then, with his wonted half-wild manner, as though in a blind charge at his objective.

I pursued him into a little office where he was operating a mimeograph machine at frantic speed, while trying at the same time to sort out the sheets that poured from the machine—music, songs for a festival, he explained in half-breaths. The bus for the Emek would pass in four minutes and he had to send these sets of music by the bus so that the comrades would have the material in time for a rehearsal tonight. There was to be a water-finding festival, with massed choruses and the Emek orchestra.

Yehuda had one ear cocked for the bus, and now he scooped up the sheets and scurried toward the gate, while I loped beside him. He was assigned to cultural activities, Yehuda explained. He composed music for the festivals, for the holidays, he directed choirs in half a dozen settlements, and of course he directed the Emek orchestra—"Ah, you should have been at the Lag B'Omer festival last year in Yagur—beautiful!"

The bus arrived. Yehuda shoved a bundle of music onto the driver's lap while giving him complicated instructions about delivering the material to a certain Tuvia in another kibbutz.

I recalled Yehuda's torments, in the year 1929, as he tried to resolve his conflict as artist and as pioneer. In the novel I had written about this conflict I had been unable to find a solution without sacrifice; in the novel, Yehuda had renounced his opportunity to develop himself as a musician. How unimaginative I had been, how incapable of finding the answers that life itself provides!



For the commune, since then, had sent Yehuda to Europe to study music, and to help prepare the German-Jewish youth for migration to Palestine. On his return he had been assigned by his comrades to these cultural tasks in order that he might put his art to the service of the community. If I too had remained, I surely would not have been lost; it was necessary to realize for my own self that I had left this place because I felt a stronger need to carry on my life in America. And in war too, all else was rationalization; I had not remained in Spain because I felt a stronger need to carry on this work, outside.

* * *

There was a cable urging me to return at once to put out the first issues of the new magazine. I ploughed in, and as each article on Spain, on Palestine, on German war preparation, on Bund activities in America went to press, I felt I was in my rightful place. But like so much of human struggle, the battle around *Inside* magazine proved to have curiously intermingled lines of force.

The first issues looked good. The magazine set off with a circulation of half a million, which kept rising with every issue. At last there was an outspokenly anti-fascist magazine with a mass audience.

At that time every liberal effort was bent in a last-stand campaign to get President Roosevelt to lift the embargo on arms to the Loyalists. On the other side, the greatest influence was that of the Catholic Church. The fourth issue of *Inside* carried a direct attack on the role of the Catholic Church in Spain, by Ernest Hemingway.

The article appeared, with two photographs. One picture showed a group of priests on the steps of a cathedral, giving

the fascist salute. Underneath was a photograph of children killed in a fascist bomb attack.

Obviously, to publish this material was a direct, daring challenge to the opposition. Melvin Morris decided to take the risk, since the article was by Hemingway.

There was one other star in his magazines—sex. An article had been submitted giving an inside view of a prostitute's life. Entitled *Los Angeles Sporting Girl,* it provided a rather complacent portrait of easy living. In her leisure hours, the girl suggested, she dressed sedately and mingled with clubwomen at their teas. Indeed, it was no longer necessary for a prostitute to live as an outcast; a clever girl could manage things very nicely, earn a steady high income, and maintain herself like any other attractive young businesswoman.

This article appeared in the same issue as Hemingway's attack on the Catholics in Spain, an unintentional, but characteristic juxtaposition.

The counter-attack began at once. Undoubtedly it was an action that had been planned for some time; but the *Sporting Girl* issue was a perfect invitation for the attack.

First, came reports from magazine distributors in the area of Bridgeport, Conn. A crusading priest in that area had opened a campaign against "magazine vice". Then news items began to appear about the projected organization of a committee for magazine purification that would parallel the committee that had brought self-censorship and the Hays Code to Hollywood. Bridgeport was the testing ground. The crusading priest had compiled a list of salacious publications, and Catholics were not only enjoined from purchasing these magazines but were to press their dealers to cease handling all publications on the list.

The list consisted of a dozen papers of the *Paris Nights* variety, and *Paradise, Beauty,* and *Inside.* Each of our publications was of course vulnerable. *Paradise's* popularity was founded on risqué humor and drawings of jazz-me girls. *Beauty* at the time used a more discreet form of semi-pornographic art, emphasizing the nipple. No issue of the magazine was complete without one or more photo-masterpieces in this genre. And *Inside* was glamorizing prostitution as a career.

The hallways were hot as the circulation boys ran back and forth with the latest reports from Bridgeport. These figures



were terrifying. And now the campaign was spreading to neighboring towns, while a national campaign was more and more loudly discussed.

There was of course an immediate staff order to tone down the contents of the publications, in the hopeful illusion that the sex material was really the source of offense. The airbrush nudes for *Paradise* were set aside to be used after things had quieted a bit, and nipples for *Beauty* were veiled.

But the second phase of the campaign now began. Important agencies cancelled advertising.

At first the reason given was summer slack. There was also a general dip in business called a recession. But the trickle of cancellations became an avalanche. Not a day passed without some horrible surprise in the form of a cancellation of an old reliable account.

The New York advertising staff was put on the grill, and soon enough they produced evidence in their own defence: there was, for instance, a stack of mail received by a client advertising in *Paradise.* The postcards and letters were all similarly worded—enough so to indicate an organized campaign: We won't buy your product as long as you continue to advertise in that filthy, degenerate magazine.

After every undressed babe had been eliminated from the coming issues, the advertising agencies were approached with the cleaned-up product. The compromise proved of little use. The letter campaign continued, the advertising cancellations continued, and subscription cancellations were coming in fast.

Then the publisher received a hint, just as during the suppression of *Model Tenement* I had received a hint to visit a priest. Only it wasn't a mere priest that Melvin Morris visited.

He made a quick trip to New York. On his return I was one of the first to be called into his office. "If I told you who I saw you wouldn't believe me," he said. "But I've had my lesson, and if I have to crawl on my knees to those people from here to New York to save my business, I'm going to do it."

The conditions? They were simple. Everything could be straightened out if the policies of the three magazines were rectified.

What policies?

Spain, for instance. There was going to be no more about

Spain. That was on the negative side. On the positive side we were going to get some first-class articles on religion, on the Vatican library, things of that kind.

For the publisher had been informed that he had been running a bunch of red magazines, featuring a lot of "Jewish communist" writers. And he had discovered the power of the people who objected to such writings. He had discovered it, amongst advertising agency executives. "You know, they have highly placed people everywhere. There's always at least one of them in a top spot, wherever you go."

One big advertising man, Morris told me, had handed him a list of names of writers considered objectionable. These writers would have to be dropped.

Who were these writers?

"Jewish reds." Spivak was one of them, he was through. And incidentally my own good Jewish name had been objected to. My name could no longer appear in these magazines, I was informed.

And so it had come home to me, from the Republic steel strike and the lawyer at the coroner's hearing who wanted to know if Larry Jacques's name had once been Jacobson, from there to Spain and to Palestine where the same people were shooting at us, and now all the way down to the use of a Jewish name in a magazine.

I declared that no one could make him eliminate Jewish names from his magazine. I must have spouted some romantic lines about the freedom of the press. Morris became excited; the life of his business was at stake. I said my life as a writer was at stake and I'd have to do what I could to protect it.

Rather wildly I confronted the editor, Winters. There wasn't only the question of what I wrote, but of the usefulness of the magazines. Surely if we fought the matter openly, before the public, we could win out against such pressure censorship.

I suggested that we lay the whole matter before the American Civil Liberties Union, and even drew up a wire, which was stopped by the magazines' business manager. As an individual writer, however, I considered that I was free to fight. I thought of the League of American Writers. This was precisely their sort of issue. And at that time, the League was virtually



a roster of American authors. I wrote a letter to the secretary stating the facts with the cautioning phrase, "for your information", and asking for suggestions on how to proceed. The results of this letter were disillusioning.

It is necessary to digress in order to introduce the history of a complicating factor. There was at this climactic moment the question of union organization at our publishing house. In some ways it was unfortunate that this question coincided with the "big trouble", but in another sense the timing was an example of the dramatic economy that can be exhibited by natural forces.

The Book and Magazine Guild had asked Winters and myself to undertake the formation of a Chicago unit, and though Winters, as a vice-president of the firm, could not become a union member, it was his thought that he could convince Melvin Morris that it would be a decided coup for *Inside,* aiming at big sales in organized labor circles, to appear as the first national magazine with a union staff. Some day when he and Mel were sitting in the coffeeshop he would say, "Mel, here's an idea worth a million circulation—"

I was a little dubious about this painless method of union organizing. Meanwhile we held a couple of meetings; in all there were sixteen members. One week, seven were fired, and the following week, nearly all the rest.

The union's committeemen, Lawrence Martin, Harvey O'Connor, and I, were called separately into Morris's office for friendly little talks. Melvin had heard something about the organization of a union. Was he a bad employer? Wasn't his office door always open?

We had no wish to engage in a union fight at the very moment when the magazines were being attacked for liberalism. Each of us responded to our employer in the same fashion, going over the ABC of unionism: a union didn't necessarily mean that an employer was "bad" or that there was friction between employer and employees, etc. My own interview seemed to be progressing well. Morris even recognized the possible advantage in the idea that *Inside* should appear with a union label. Yes, he said, he saw no objection to a union for some of the upper editorial help. But this union was for the whole shop, wasn't it?

I blinked.

Well, no fifteen-dollar-a-week typist was going to be in a position to tell him how to run his business!

This primitive reflex should have been enough to shatter our illusions. It was easy to talk about a "boss showing himself in his true colors", but I knew too much of the background in this case, and I couldn't help recognizing the conflicts, the distortions of character brought about through a man's struggle to rise to power. I couldn't dismiss a basic sympathy for Morris. He was Mort Abramson of *The Old Bunch,* confronted with a strike in the hat factory, and Mort wasn't bad hearted, he was just full of fears. My own boss, like Mort, had the heart to be a liberal, but his fears were too much for him. I recalled the exultant tirade in which he had explained to me, at the inception of *Inside*, how he was going to show up the Jew-haters. And now it seemed to me that the forces had been twisted around. Was he aware of their inner connection? Unhappily this was the classic situation in which many a Jew had found himself in the early days of Hitler, and the fear reflexes had proven then, as now, to be the most powerful.

It was in this paradoxical way that the union affair linked up with the attack from the right, for when Morris insisted that my name had to be stricken from his magazines, I wondered whether he wasn't really just trying to get back at me for the union affair.

And in this tangle I realized how there is complexity in every struggle, how part of each side is always on the other side. For what was of more importance at the moment, to unionize or to help the publisher preserve his magazines against the fascist attack? What was of greater importance, to preserve my Jewish name in the magazines, or to preserve the possibility of publishing useful things in them? But if we abandoned our union for no other reason than to calm the publisher for the larger fight, would his magazines thereafter publish liberal material? Was he at all interested in preserving the liberty of speech in his magazines, or only interested in keeping the advertising? He had already declared he would revise his policies in a certain direction—and did this mean only insofar as material about the Church was concerned, or a shift in policy



all the way down the line? No, we could feel little hope, it seemed to me, when a publisher who was himself so sensitive about being Jewish would eliminate a writer's Jewish name from his magazine.

Nothing could be saved, and to sacrifice the union would be to add one more capitulation. We took our case to the Labor Relations Board.

It was in this situation that I wrote to the League of American Writers for advice. A week later I received a call on the office phone, from Morris. I was treated to a blistering bawling out. Now I was unmasked, now everything was proven. So I was no communist? What about my letter in the *New Masses?*

I had no idea what letter he could mean. It turned out to be the letter I had sent to the secretary of the League of American Writers, marked "for your information." He had bucked it right over to the *New Masses.* Better than that. In a few days our cause was pleaded in Mike Gold's column The *Daily Worker.* Readers were urged to send protest letters about us.

The dutiful postcards began to pour in, and the business manager showed me a stack of communist protests for Levin on one side of his desk, and Catholic protests against red writers, on the other side! There I was with the kiss of death firmly planted. Morris now "had the goods" on me. I was treated to hour-long telephone tirades when he would scream "Why don't you quit!" and I would shout back, "Why don't you fire me!"

I had watched ten men shot dead in their effort to exercise their right to organize under the nation's law, and I had still believed there could be soft solutions.

In the labor board hearings, we were advised in a friendly way that though the company was obviously anti-union, our chances to fight the matter were small. Indeed, there was already "pressure from Washington" to hush things up.

Our handful of members debated a strike. The parent union was rent by factional political strife just then, and seemed to have no energy for questions of unionization. In the end, we capitulated to the labor board's persuasion. Those who had

been fired voted to accept adjustment and severance pay and the theoretical right to be first on the list for re-hiring.

I had brought up the question of the suppression of my writing. My reputation as a film critic was of some value, as my work was fairly widely quoted in the serious journals, and had been selected for book publication. A contract was arranged for the continuance of my reviews for a year. I didn't want to return to my editorial job; for one thing I had my steel strike novel to write. And the atmosphere in the penthouse office was now something like the atmosphere in the nudist colony after the showdown. You couldn't live in those places, afterward.

I could brood over the "forces of reaction." Twice now, in my own little battles, I had encountered them through the agency of the Church. Or, in the second case, I could turn my anger against my employer and convince myself that he was, even more than I, split, divided against himself, a Jew showing the classic signs of inner conflict. I could recognize that part of his animosity toward me was from an inner conviction that I had less at stake, that I could virtuously follow through and fight for my identity whereas he, who was equally sensitive about being a Jew, had to yield to expediency, and bannish Jewish names from his magazines, even prevailing upon an editor named Cohen to alter his name. All this, I am sure, he conceived as a "tactical retreat"—he, the Jew, would triumph over his enemies in the end by proving himself more successful than his competitors, by making more money. He had to forego the real question, the basic question of our lives. To pretend one was not a Jew as a writer, as an editor, as a publisher, was in essence to pretend that there were no Jews in the world, that there were no problems, that there were no oppressed—no Jews, no Negroes, no poor—and to refrain from any activity that would bring change. And this was a self-punishment, for I believe that every man strives to satisfy an inner urge to better the world; the bitterest disappointment is for those who secretly know that their efforts have miscarried.

* * *



I now felt that I understood much better what I had seen on that field, a year ago, and that I could write the strike novel. I tried to follow up the families of the murdered men, hoping to begin to personalize the tragedy. But as I went on, I realized that what I needed most of all was a familiarity with the men's work, for it seemed to me that all of the labor novels I had read, aside from Zola, had been deficient in rendering just this that was the core of any man's life—his relationship to his task, his sense of productivity, which I felt must exist even in a routine job in a mill.

Though living in Chicago, the greatest steel-producing center in the world, I had, like nearly all of its citizens, never been inside a steelmill. The gap in my education in this respect struck me as part of our amazing ignorance of the basic realities in our world; I didn't know what steel was, how it was made, any more than I had known what bread was until I cut wheat in Palestine.

True, one could go out to the mills as to the stockyards, and be guided through with a tourist group. I did this. But the trip was only enough to show me how deeply I needed intimate contact with the mills if I was to write a true book about steel workers.

There are certain efforts of mankind which achieve beauty if only because they unceasingly demonstrate the massive courage of this little animal. Any huge construction enterprise involving the coordinated work of thousands of men always produces this reverence in me, not because of size, but because of pattern and organized equilibrium. Sometimes the sight evokes a choking emotional pride. What people can do! And my first trip through the steelmill was in that sense overwhelming.

Feeding this emotion was the fiery visual majesty of the whole, the vast gloomy steel-framed sheds with sudden spurts of sulphurous flames in their remote darknesses, the ponderous movement of huge cranes and rolling machines materializing out of the shadows, the slow unsheathing of ingots revealing the glowing columns of redhot steel, the balance of vast cauldrons suspended in the murky heights of the open-hearth shed as they poured the molten steel, all this was visual drama of the highest

order, carried on daily, continually, and through the nights; it was the devoted offering, the ritual of men who loved their work with the wedded love that contains pain, rage, every degree of irritation, a sense of bondage, and fulfillment.

And as I progressed through the mills I began to separate out, to truly see the movements of the men, movements that could at once be recognised as prescribed and traditional, movements that were the only way and the way a thing was done since the way was found and steel was found; even in glimpsing them for the first time one recognized that these movements were among the timeless cultures, the ways in which son followed father, movements identical in Birmingham and Gary and Magnetogorsk. The way of peering into a furnace with a half stoop, the way of a circle of men swinging each in turn to hurl a shovelful of lining-stuff into a furnace, the way of each man shading his eyes with the upsweeping hand freed as the shovel lost the weight of its load, the way of the circle moving like a ballet movement before the furnace door, or the wonderful balance and economy of movement of a worker with giant tongs snaking the head of an almost fluid endless rod from one press, feeding it into another—all this was classic, and the impact of all this was far too great to absorb casually.

I saw too what I had vaguely sensed from outside: that though there was a common idea among us that modern industry turned workers into robots repeating standardized movements, this was largely a misconception, for the most repeated and ritualized of movements are accomplished with art, and this was a world of perfect skills, where the repetition of the same movement every day was no less artful than a repeated performance on a stage, a world in which experience and feel, in which the judgement senses of good men were more valuable than the most delicate of measuring instruments. A man who had the feel of making steel could analyze the composition of a sample by looking at a piece of metal broken off by a sledgehammer, and often as accurately as a laboratory analysis.

And I began to feel what was missing in nearly all the literature, all the oratory of labor struggles and strikes. It was the prideful relationship of man to his work, the sense of achievement which bound him to his task, particularly in the making of the tough, the heavy stuff of civilization. A sense of recognition of



his participation was greatly needed, for him, as a direct reward. A man who could make a reasonably steady living, however modest, would find additional recompense in watching the product roll out. And this too explained some of the lag in the struggle for economic betterment, for some men will accomodate themselves to a meagre life if they have the other, spiritual recompense, the satisfaction of doing a good job.

How, then, could I learn something of their work, how could I get something of the feel of making steel, in order that I might truly understand and convey their attitudes? Reading was of little use. There were a few semi-technical books that served to break down the process into comprehensible units. There was a whole technical jargon to learn, and in this the books helped. But for the feel of the mills I needed to be inside a plant, and for some time.

The obvious idea was to get a job in the mills. But I had no skill, and even if I managed to get on as a general laborer I would probably see nothing of the whole process of making steel; I would need a job that permitted me to be in various sections long enough to understand the separate operations.

There was still wide unemployment in the industry, with thousands of experienced men on waiting lists. Even if I set aside the scruple of taking a man's place for a while, how was I to get such a job?

What I really needed was permission to hang around a mill. The best method, I decided, was to ask for it directly, as a writer. I decided to approach an owning family of the Inland Steel Company. Possibly I was influenced by knowing they were Jews, and that a daughter of the family flirted with left-wing little-theater groups. Through her I was briefed on which uncle to approach. I received an appointment.

As I waited outside his office I reflected that it would be only intelligent of the management to have me write out of contact rather than out of imagination, about steel-making. Besides, such huge industries were a part of our national culture, and in that sense we writers had a moral right of entry.

Presently I was beckoned forward by a secretary. I had time to glimpse a heavyset man behind a desk. "The answer is no," he snapped.

In my surprise, I could only say, "But you could have refused

without asking me up here, if you had already decided to say no."

"I just wanted to see what you looked like," he said.

I appealed to the union leaders. Perhaps they could get me inside the U.S. mills, where they had a contract. But they couldn't even get their own organizers inside.

Then quite by luck I got my chance. An industrial film company was making a short Technicolor documentary of the operation of the U.S. Steel plant in Gary, the biggest mill in the world. Local film critics were invited to watch. I wrote a poetic account of this, as one of my last pieces in *Paradise*. The steelmill management reprinted it as a publicity brochure. At that point I asked the public relations director for permission to study the mills, and was granted a pass.

On several days of each week I drove out to Gary, put on overalls, and drifted around the mill.

Now gradually I began to separate out the functions of the men. It was difficult to talk to them through the roar of the shop, but from their shouted phrases I pieced together the pattern of each operation. In the evenings, I hung around the taverns or the union headquarters, and a few of the men got to know me, telling me things out of their working lives. Gradually the material was coming in and taking form.

I began to see my story as built around a series of life-accounts of the workers. I would imagine the lives of the ten strikers who had been killed. I would place each of these men in his own operation, following his work in the mill, and between their life stories I would thread the narrative of the strike, so that each portion of the novel furthered the other—the life stories feeding into the strike narrative, with the foreknowledge of each man's eventual action in the strike living in the reader as he followed the man's life history.

The idea offered possibilities for the construction of a pattern whose elements flow together from all levels, a kind of pattern I have always found richly gratifying. In addition to the interplay of the strike narrative with the life story elements, I would be able to evoke the whole structure of the mill and of the community around it, the hierarchy from the trained generations of



open-hearth men down to the Mexican and Negro laborers who were barred from acquiring skills. I would be able to follow the growth of economic understanding in the poor whites originally brought from the south as strikebreakers in a union battle some years ago, and I would be able to show the curious ranges of racial status amongst the Irish, the Poles, the Italians, the Mexicans, and the Negroes.

Moreover I could place my men in their jobs in such a way as to be able to follow the making of steel from the work of the first man on the dinky engine running the raw materials, the ore and the coke to the furnaces, through the open-hearth man and the crane operators and the soaking-pit operators and the slab-mill operators to the last man at the tinplate mill fearing the universal machine that would rob him not only of his job but of the employment of his creative skill.

On still another level I became absorbed in an attempt to suggest philosophically how each of these men had progressed to the same determined point, where their simultaneous death was waiting—some through flawed character, some through having used up their lives, some conversely because of the great power of life in them, the antithesis of death transmuting itself in a kind of mystical consummation.

My employment of the life story device was to be greeted by some critics as an effective innovation; probably Dos Passos should be credited with the invention of the interpolated life story in the modern novel. It has more recently been used with wide popularity, notably in Norman Mailer's war novel, *The Naked and the Dead*. It should be remarked that the group novel itself, developing in our time in contrast to the novel of the individual, is a reflection of the progress of equalitarian ideas, of democracy, of the sense of the inter-relationship of human beings reaching ever greater importance.

As I began to write the book in Gary, the accumulation of difficulties at *Paradise,* combined with a crisis at home, affected me. Perhaps what I have to report about myself is not really divorced from public events, for my conflicts in regard to Spain, in regard to continuing to write as a Jew, now related themselves to the self-destructive elements I had felt since childhood.

I come therefore to describe a condition which may be called the secret malady of writers; though it has been hinted at and even openly spoken about, it remains quite obscure, and I believe that a great proportion of writers have suffered from it without being willing or able to admit their disability. When this malady is talked about it is usually called the block. Being blocked. Many a psychoanalyst has listened to descriptions of this complaint, for while the malady drove writers of other generations to drink and to drugs, it has driven contemporary writers to the analyst's couch.

Some recover, overcoming their block. Sometimes only temporarily.

What is it? How is it to be recognized?

When a writer suffers from a sense of utter futility in the employment of words, he is blocked. When he suffers from a sense of personal inadequacy, of incapacity to give form or utterance to the ideas that surge in his mind, he is blocked. The malady is of course known in every other human field, but it seems to have a special tendency to attack writers as their work cannot often be masked in routine, but requires constant fresh output.

The effect of the block is sometimes like the torture of living in a vacuum, feeling at the same time a compression from all directions, and as though something inside oneself were pushing to explode in all directions.

The malady indeed sometimes seems to take literal shape, appearing as a block in the doorway to one's creative consciousness, a great block of metaphysical stone, against which one beats in vain. Or, as one struggles against it, the block undergoes metamorphosis, becoming a viable fluid substantiality, a canny and aware adversary. The embattled writer employs every ruse, affecting to be attentive elsewhere, busy doing carpentry, photography, listening to music, hoping to catch the block off guard, to find that the monster has relaxed, curled, leaving a cranny of the gateway unfilled, so that he may slip through and attain his own creative sources. Sometimes he is successful. But the block reacts quickly, its form flows back, filling every hole, every tunnel; octopus-like it is still there.

The first reaction to the block is to refuse to recognize its existence, then, to run away from it through other activities.



—I can't write because I have too many distractions. I can't write because I have no security, I'm worried about supporting my family. I can't write because I have a newspaper, a magazine, a radio, a movie job. I can't write because I want to drink.

You face the block when you eliminate all the possible escapes and organize everything for writing: the place, with its necessary seclusion, even the cottage by the seaside with the view over the water, the money to cover six months or a year, and you make ready the idea you want to develop, and the material for it, and then you sit down one morning and nothing comes out. You make notes, try to organize your material more firmly, note the characters, the events in their order, you review the first incident in your mind, and use all your devices to make yourself work—you get the words of the first sentence rolling in your head, and the rest will flow, surely. You face the paper again. You write the first sentence, sometimes only the first six words, without even completing the sentence, it dies on you.

Then you sit facing the block. Sometimes immobile for hours. Then you lie down. Thus, prone, the most violent struggle takes place. Not a muscle of your body moves. Your mind prowls and prowls around the obstacle, seeking a place to take hold. All is smooth, blank. After a time you are exhausted as though through the most intense muscular effort. Your mind slips from the smooth antagonizing wall, you drowse.

You wake, feeling an upsurge of energy, and try again. You know a name for this, it is typewriter fever, and you try writing with pencil and paper, the real thing. Sometimes this is a crevice through which one can temporarily penetrate. And then there are other sly ways. One can altogether avoid the physical act of writing, one can dictate. And one can collaborate.

It is simply the presence of the other person that is sometimes enough, in collaboration, to exorcise the monster, the block. And again, collaboration is an escape to another kind of writing, to another level of creativity, just as journalism is an escape.

The system of teaming writers in Hollywood is undoubtedly a practical reaction to the writers' malady. But that is already side-channel writing. Let us confront the main adversary, the immobile, smooth-walled block. Some writers break the hours of battle with innumerable cigarettes, coffee, drugs. I take it pure. I have never liked smoking, I've never taken to drinking alone.

After some hours, if I am in a shack somewhere, I make coffee, eat crackers or thick pieces of bread with slabs of cheese, for it is amazing what an outflow of energy takes place in the silent motionless struggle.

And the block is not a monster of occasional visit. It is always there for some of us. What we get written is accomplished in spite of its presence. The dream is of a constant beautiful flow of ordered thoughts and words in a bookwalled room by a window over the water; the reality is a sputter, with chunks of words hastily flung out while there is an opening in the block.

In my first writing, I had no idea of this enemy. *Reporter* and *Frankie and Johnny* seemed to come from an inner charge, they wrote themselves, as we say.

During the writing of *Yehuda,* I already felt the presence of the block. For there my conditions were ideal, I had the little house by the sea, enough money, all my material fresh in my mind, and yet morning after morning I fought to get something on paper. The worst would be the anaesthetizing lethargy; I would lie down, and presently would drowse. Finally, I found a trick of writing in a standing position at a sort of lectern.

With each book the blight seemed to be closing further on me. The pipe was choking up. And I was fearful and secretive of my malady. But during my time at *Paradise* I began to suspect that others suffered from this same disease that I had imagined to be purely a personal problem, and since then I have known it to be general.

I first identified it in a few fragmentary papers that we received from F. Scott Fitzgerald. One was called *The Crack-Up.* Through his oblique references, I recognised the same states of self-torment, the sense of the futility of human contact, the presence of the block, mute, monstrous, undefinable and unassailable.

Fitzgerald later escaped the block to some mild extent in Hollywood; he began to write again, and left *The Last Tycoon* as evidence of his struggle. I never met him, and knew only what I sensed through his writing, particularly through the haunting *Tender Is The Night* with its drive toward obscurity and self-destruction—for of course the monster blocking the way is a projection, a wraith of our inner selves.

How many writers I have suspected in this suffering! The disease sometimes goes by the old-fashioned name of being



written out. Dreiser, who in twenty years couldn't get down to the last volume of the Cowperwood trilogy; Faulkner who passes through years of tormented silence; Julian Green and other famous ones whose material becomes ever more scant. A word from Hemingway once was like a salutation from a tacit fellow sufferer—wishing me the joy of the time when I "wouldn't have to write any more books." For the torment of the block is just this conflict—there is the compulsion to write, and the self-obstruction.

The block operates only on the highest creative levels. It has never, for instance, impaired my journalistic capacity or my capacity for writing anything to order. It works only against that holy of holies, creative writing.

*The Old Bunch* was difficult to get onto paper, but my bitterest struggle began with *Citizens.* To escape from tension at work and at home I went to Gary and rented a little hotel room near the mills, arranging to take my meals in a nearby boarding-house where I might be amongst the steel workers for a while each day. To come to know them was slow and difficult, due first to my being obviously a person from a different world, but also to the ingrown secretiveness of boardinghouse habituees. They are men who have failed to develop close contacts in life, and are therefore likely to be reserved and uncommunicative.

I had no easy explanation for my presence in their own terms, and gave the honest one, that I was a writer who wanted to know about the mills. They were cautious, laconic, and only very slowly began to reveal something of their lives.

I would stay around the mill for several hours every morning, then go to the boardinghouse for lunch, and then to my dingy little cell to work. Usually I couldn't get to write anything until late in the afternoon, almost suppertime. Every day the battle was tougher.

I had eliminated every means, every chance of distraction, just as at the nudist camp. I had only one book with me—*Crime and Punishment,* which I would read before sleep, with the feeling that the story I was trying to write was the modern problem of crime and punishment, involving social consciousness, whereas the problem in Dostoievsky's day had been seen in terms of the individual conscience.

All through the winter and into spring I struggled in that

room, in the battle that every writer, every creative worker knows so well. Somehow I managed to get the first draft of *Citizens* down on paper. One day it was done, and I put the manuscript into a little suitcase with a few shirts, took my typewriter, placed both cases on the rear ledge of my coupé, and drove back to Chicago. I had to see a film preview that evening, and so I drove directly downtown, parking the car under the Wabash Avenue L. I locked the coupé and went to the screening room.

When we came out toward Wabash Avenue I sensed as I approached the car that something was wrong. Then I realized—the window was open.

The car had been broken into and pilfered. I had been stupid in leaving the typewriter and suitcase in view on the ledge.

The sole first copy of *Citizens,* so bitterly obtained, was gone.

I ran to a drugstore, phoned the police, explained.—Wabash Avenue, they said, yah, lots of car robbers there. The thieves usually rummaged through their loot in a nearby alley, the police said, throwing away whatever they couldn't sell.

My wife and I took different sides of the street, ran up and down alleys, searched areaways, opened ashcans and garbage cans in the hope that the thief might have thrown away the manuscript. I walked for blocks, watching the gutters.

Most horrible, during that hour, was the illogical sensation within me that this was part of my struggle with the formless monster, an hysterical fantasy of the monster unfairly coming out into the physical world and overcoming me by the foulest of tricks, after I had attained so painful a victory, after I had managed to get my work down on paper. Now I had nothing. Now I felt a total end of will and energy. I would never be able to face the monster again, never be able to write a word on paper.

Finally we gave up and went home.

The next day I put ads in the papers, begging for the return of my manuscript. There were no results.

I couldn't return to that coffin-room in Gary to start over. I couldn't work at home. I rented a room in a little hotel nearby. Day after day I sat there, blank.



The only hope was escape. I could go to Hollywood where I could keep up my film reviewing while I tried to rewrite my novel.

There, we moved from one house to another, from Hollywood to more modest quarters in Los Angeles, where no film people tread. The most difficult problem for the writer is always his place to work; basements, garrets, sheds can serve, but unless one is completely shut off from the rest of the house there is always the possibility a writer secretly dreads—that it may be noticed when his typewriter is not in action. Such periods may be the times of his most intense struggle, yet there is always the dread of a knock on the door, "If you're not working, dear, could you—." And if there is no knock, there is the additional torment that others in the house may be worrying about his difficulty in writing.

The only solution is real isolation, where nobody can tell whether the typewriter is in action, and where a man can lie down without fear of seeming indolence. Once, in Hollywood, I actually cleaned out a little henhouse, where I worked on *Citizens.* Slowly I began to get the work down. I don't know and never will know how much was memory, how much I wrote anew. Some parts of the book must have been pure recall.

We moved again, to a little house with a patio, and a shed on the far side. The shed was equipped as a home carpentry shop, with a lathe and a Sears, Roebuck bandsaw. The previous occupant had made bookends for artcraft shoppes; his specialty had evidently been a design of sleepy Mexicans, and everywhere there were stacks of jig-sawed Mexicans with big hats over their eyes.

One of the saws had a platform that could be moved up and down. I adjusted it to typewriter level; I'd found the ideal workroom. At last *Citizens* was once more on paper.

Meanwhile, *Paradise* appeared with my first film review since leaving Chicago. To my astonishment, I found it signed Patterson Murphy. Pat Murphy for Meyer Levin. I could visualize the moment of inspiration, back there in the coffeeshop. A way to fix the Catholics and Levin, neatly in the same package!

I wrote to Melvin Morris as Jew to Jew. I pointed out that it would inevitably be known that I was still writing the reviews and

that it might be imagined I had myself selected or consented to such a pseudonym. In respect for our own people I pleaded that he choose a simple Jewish name like Bernstein or at least a neutral name like Jones instead of Pat Murphy. Probably my letter afforded additional amusement. I received no reply.

I could of course have stopped writing the reviews—but that, I thought, was just what he wanted, and I would gain only the obscurest of principles. Besides I needed the pay while completing my novel.

I could only reflect on the curious self-hatred of the Jew, inventing such a joke.

It was instructive to watch the Morris publications as month by month sex crept back. But the bargain on policy had been kept. *Inside* was about as militant as the *Saturday Evening Post.* It became crystal clear, then, what had really been the object of the clean-up pressure.

But there was another effect, too. Issue by issue the magazine's circulation plummeted; within a few months, *Inside* was dead. At least the public had shown that it knew what it wanted.

* * *

Now there happened with *Citizens* the culminating episode in my series of experiences with the Jewish problem in writing. I realize that it may well seem that a recurrent difficulty is self-made, and that I am inflexible; so, apparently, is society.

In the fall of 1939 I went to New York to confer with Morris Ernst on any possibility of libel in *Citizens,* since it was written so close to actual events; I made a few minor changes at his suggestion, received approval from Stonehill's, and packed my bag. As I made a final call to say goodbye to Zablodowsky, he said, "It's good you phoned. Reis asked to see you before you left."

I assumed this was to be a handshake visit with my publisher, and made an appointment before traintime. But when I arrived at Stonehill's, Zablodowsky looked worried. He warned me against hasty decisions, and wished me luck.



I was ushered into the head office. My publisher made several complimentary remarks about *Citizens,* and then said he had an idea related to its significance as an American book. He could see my book as a really outstanding American novel—a sort of industrial *Grapes of Wrath.* And he was prepared to promote it as such.

There I was trembling on the if or but. Yes, I had finally arrived (if or but). I would at last get the big deal, the all-out promotion, the works that meant a long seat on the best-seller list, the big money, security, the possibility of years of work without side-jobs, yes, all this was trembling on a little if or but between myself and the publisher.

He broached his idea. It concerned one of the characters in the book, Mitch Wilner, a Jewish doctor who helped the strikers. Now, *Citizens* was not a book about Wilner; it was a general novel about a strike. Wilner served as a linking thread, and his being a Jew had some significance in the story, though it was certainly not the key point, just as anti-Semitism was a concomitant but not a cause of fascism.

My publisher felt that the story would be much more typically American if this doctor were not a Jew.

If I happened to see this point his way and could revise the story, making Mitch Wilner a more typical American, then he saw nothing in the way of the great promotion. If I wasn't able to feel or see the point his way, of course Stonehill's would still do all it could for the book, it was a fine piece of work and would get the best publishing attention; but in the latter case he wouldn't feel justified in giving the book the outstanding promotion he had suggested.

I listened to the proposition with outward calm, and promised to give it the fullest consideration. I left his office in a complete tumult. First, I wondered whether it was really possible that the book would be more typically American if this character were not a Jew?

To begin with, anyone acquainted with labor circles would recognize that a doctor who volunteered his services to a union would more likely be a Jew. As far as being typical of the American scene was concerned, this character could remain unchanged. Further, since my book followed a set of actual events, it would be a distortion to pretend that the doctor was not a Jew.

But perhaps my publisher had been speaking in another sense about typicality. Perhaps I was back to my luncheon in Chicago with another publisher who had felt that *The Old Bunch* would be more typical if it consisted of a melange of nationalities rather than a group of Jews. In this sense, "typical" was merely a word that applied to a disguise we had not yet peeled off. It was a word that reflected a misconception, a national inaccuracy that impeded us from fighting our prejudices by helping us to pretend that our differences were indeed being dissolved away in a rapid melting-pot process.

It was the conception that accepted the All-Star football team with the Polish and Irish names as proof that we were a completed happy amalgam, instead of as evidence of good but limited progress toward unprejudiced understanding.

In that popular fiction sense, my book would be more typical if the doctor's name were Sweeney instead of Wilner.

But could it be true that such a change would make *Citizens* a more successfully promotable novel? Could there be an appreciable resistance to the book from prospective readers if it remained as it was? Did a cursory reader risk having the impression that it was a book about Mitch Wilner, the Jew, rather than a novel about a strike involving Americans of every extraction including Jews? And if he did have such an impression, would this diminish his interest in the novel?

I couldn't see how the change could make any appreciable difference. Why, then, should Mr. Reis want my character changed?

I recalled the reactions to *The Old Bunch,* and my feelings about my publisher's connection with the Anti-Defamation League. Much of their work was excellent, constructive, necessary, but at that period their policy sometimes seemed to be: The less said about the Jews the better. Let us be unobtrusive if we cannot be nonexistent. And here I was putting him in the position of being the publisher of a book which portrayed a Jew as an active union sympathizer, a book susceptible perhaps to misuse by the enemy who cried out that all Jews were communists.

But if my publisher were merely worried about this possible embarrassment, why didn't he put the argument on that plane? Why couldn't he say, Look, Levin, you know I spend a great



deal of my time these days on the work of the Anti-Defamation League. Your *Old Bunch* already caused me embarrassment with my friends. They don't see the question the way you see it. After all, if it isn't a great literary point in your book that the doctor is a Jew, can't you make him an Italian or a Swede? The strike story would remain just as strong. A Swede could be just as conscientious a liberal as a Jew. Do me a favor, make him a Swede, and I'll have your book on the best-seller list from January to June.

Certainly, since I entertained this suspicion, I should have confronted Mr. Reis with it, and tried to have a full and frank understanding. Perhaps much future resentment could have been avoided. But I was intimidated and in torment. It would have been an easier decision for me to make if I had had a successful career and didn't feel I was risking my big chance in this one case. I was so hungry, so desperate for a success at last. I was in position for it. I was due. I had the book—for the publisher had indicated that he could, if he wished, promote it with first-class results. I had a favorable starting position in the accumulated good will of reviewers and readers who had been following my work. How could I refuse to make a little change which would never be remarked, even if my book were to be at all remembered?

My craftsman's mind began to work on the problem. Yes, it would be feasible. I could do it in two or three weeks. I began to visualize the Swedish doctor. His family began to form around him. Mitch Wilner gained six inches in height, talked more slowly, acted through inflexible logical conviction rather than through emotional conviction. I even found a device for saving the anti-Semitic incident in the coroner's hearing, by having a second doctor involved in a minor way, a Jew. Yes, the Swedish doctor might have a Jewish friend who had helped out in the rush of work at the hospital, and whose name was thereafter brought up at the coroner's hearing in a repetition of the Jacques-Jacobson incident. Surely my publisher wouldn't mind a little minor character's being a Jew, if it helped to save part of the exposition of my story.

Of course, the link with the *Old Bunch* would be lost. The continuity in the development of Mitch Wilner would have to be sacrificed. And though the possibility of continuing other

characters in a series of novels would not necessarily have to be abandoned, I probably wouldn't have the heart to go ahead with such a program if I transmuted Mitch Wilner in this novel.

Still, the book would reach a greater audience, have a greater social effect.

I decided to write a few chapters experimentally, to get the feel of the change. I worked for a few days, and showed the new material to Zablodowsky. "Well, you've done it," he said. He thought the new material sounded all right, if I wanted to go through with the alteration.

And so the question became squarely a matter of principle.

And that night I had a dream. In my dream, I was a boy in Chicago, on the way somewhere, on Roosevelt Road. I had with me a lion and a tiger, on leashes. I was trying to get onto a streetcar at the corner of Roosevelt and Halsted Streets—the ghetto corner, a block from my birthplace. There was a drizzle. I couldn't get onto the crowded car because of the animals. I stepped back, pulling the animals out of the rain, into the vestibule of a bank that was on the corner. There, the lion and the tiger were quiet. In my dream I knew there was really a men's clothing store where I had put the bank.

I had had the animals as cubs and they had played together in the back yard of the house on Racine Avenue. They had grown up together and they were inside of me, in my breast. Now they were almost fullgrown and they had taken to quarrelling and I had a terrible fear that one day in their fighting they would tear me apart from within me where they were. The little back yard could hold them no longer. I was taking them somewhere to find out what to do with them.

Then I was on the streetcar, on the rear platform with my animals, and then I arrived at my father's little store near the Dearborn Station. I explained my trouble. Someone, the tramp Hogan who hung around my father's place suggested that I sell them to the circus. But the circus wasn't in town. My father said perhaps the animals would be all right in the zoo. I looked in the phonebook for the zoo, but I knew they would only take the lion. Still, if I gave one away and kept the other, things would be peaceful. There would be no more fighting. But I realized that I couldn't separate them. I loved them both too much. And it would be cruel to separate them from each other



after they had grown up together. And perhaps, I thought, I would be able to keep them, to manage with them after all, to find room for them in my bosom. Yes, I had to keep them together.

At the time it seemed to me that the meaning of the dream was obvious. The tiger and the lion were my Jewish heritage and my talent; in each was my strength, and now I feared that they would destroy each other and destroy me, but I couldn't sell them, I couldn't part with them, I had to find a way for them to live together.

Many years later I sought other meanings of the dream, in psychoanalysis. But the true, the meaningful meaning was what it had for me then, for I accepted it as what my inmost being desired, as my will—that I should feel that I could not separate the two powers, that they had to live together within me. And therefore I knew I could not change Mitch Wilner's origin, in *Citizens*.

The feeling that I at last knew what I inwardly wanted to do gave me some peace of mind. I informed my publisher that I had made every effort to see his point, but couldn't alter my book. There had to be a world in which honesty was permissable.

Undoubtedly, in the situation, I should have gone to another publishing house. But this would have meant at least a month of delay; everyone felt there would be fullscale war in spring, and presumptious as it is, we all have to study our personal difficulties in relation to universal horrors. I had to take into account that my strike novel would be lost unless it came out before the war began. I hoped Stonehill's would still get it out in winter. But there were more delays, with another set of libel-hunting lawyers, and in the end *Citizens* appeared just as the Nazis opened their western campaign. Though *Citizens* was everywhere highly praised, and indeed ranked with *Grapes of Wrath*—except in the communist press where it was disposed of with the stiletto marked "unclear thinking"—the book had

little opportunity to secure public attention. But nowhere was there an allusion to Wilner's being a Jew.

* * *

During the long period when America was not yet in the war, I shared the general sense of paralysis as a helpless bystander. Paris fell; I heard from the Szwarcs at last; Tereska and Gina were in a refugee camp in Portugal, they were going to England; Marek had volunteered in a Polish unit in France, perhaps he was a prisoner.

And I was in Hollywood, trying to write film "originals", to write slick little stories for *Collier's*. Defense plants began to rise all around us, until the aircraft factories supplanted the studios in the dominant life of the community, and suddenly I decided I too would become a war worker, at least that would be doing something, and I went to take welding instruction every morning. Our housekeeper was just putting her son through such a course, and there was great confusion in her when she saw the master, who usually practiced a mysterious profession tapping on a typewriter in the little room behind the garage, now decking himself in leather coveralls and a helmet, and going to school like her own son. I wasn't very good at welding; the Negro in the next booth got the feel of it in a few days, while I struggled for weeks. But in the meantime I conceived a plan to make a film in Palestine, together with Herbert Kline, who had just finished *The Forgotten Village* with Steinbeck in Mexico.

My story was of a young Nazi, bred with only the Nazi preachment about Jews, who got himself into some sort of trouble in one of the Danube countries, and, fleeing, came by accident onto one of the Jewish refugee vessels that then thronged the river. Carried along perforce on their desperate trip to Palestine, landed with them illegally, he was taken along to an outpost settlement. The boy who had thought of Jews only as a people who cheated, loved money, never worked with their hands, and were afraid to fight, now lived with them through



pioneering hardships, and through the attacks of Fawzi's bands, learning what Jews were really like.

We couldn't get capital to go to Palestine to make our film, and I tried then to write it as a novel. I found myself utterly blocked. With the story complete in my mind, with the background familiar, with a sense of the urgent need for such a story at the moment when Rommel was threatening Palestine itself, I was unable to write at all. I pampered myself, tried every device, went to New Orleans and lay day after day in a little apartment staring at the ceiling. Perhaps I was resenting all my failures as a writer, resenting my publisher, and holding back my material in masochistic spite. Perhaps it was the sense of guilt in my own futility while Jews were being murdered in Europe, while they were drowning on refugee ships that were not allowed to bring them to Palestine, and while they were on the edge of annihilation in Palestine itself. What use was I, with my little writing.

I drove back to Hollywood, with a sense of complete defeat. At this time, appropriately, the studios opened to me. I was put under contract. For six months I worked on "defense" stories at Columbia. Meanwhile we entered the war.

For some writers, there was a question of whether it was not of greater value to remain and write the films for the people. Every writer with a sense of social value in his art has held this discussion with himself and his colleagues. To get to the base of it one must consider what is really the place of the writer in the modern world: whether he writes fiction or reportage, each serious writer considers himself a little bit of the conscience of the world, and his place most closely approximates that of the biblical prophet: he is the one who may speak out, rebuke kings and rulers and populace, recall them to what is just. If, in our day, he writes fiction, he is related to the prophets who spoke in parable. In our generation, the purely aesthetic writer has been in the background; more than ever, the writer has accepted a moral function, and even the recent trend toward objective psychological analysis is controlled through a selectivity that, in itself, enforces moral judgement.

In my case, I always felt the sense of vocation reinforced by

my Jewish heritage. Very well, then—we consider ourselves prophets. And what is a prophet without listeners? For this reason, the writer of today, laden with his burdensome social mission, is plagued more deeply than the aesthetic writer who could rationalize a lack of wide audience with the conceit that only few people were capable of appreciating his work. A social-minded writer cannot flatter himself in this fashion; part of his art is to influence human behavior, and for this he must reach the widest audience.

This line of reasoning leads inevitably to the elevation of the mass media, and the supreme of these is of course the cinema, which has largely supplanted the Church as a center of influence. It could scarcely be wondered, then, that the whole left wing of the literary world drifted toward Hollywood, from the mentor, Lawson, to Odets, Maltz, and many lesser known. In one form of rationalization it is better to get a sentence of truth into the consciousness of an audience of fifty million than a whole book before the eyes of a few thousand already convinced intellectuals.

I don't believe that the ease of life in Hollywood contributed much to this rationalization. I think that most of these writers would have walked out on the soft life if they didn't sincerely believe they could do some good.

Let us accept that over a period of years a number of writers were able to affect a change in the film treatment of certain aspects of our civilization; they were able to introduce occasional Negro characters who were neither adlepated valets nor crooning mammies, they were able to remind the public that immigrants with outlandish names could prove to be decent and useful citizens. In the slow evolution of our national attitudes, these matters count; but who can weigh the cost and the return? Is the slight acceleration of Hollywood's cultural lag the supreme goal for a writer?

Our entry into the war made the question immediate. For if one took oneself seriously—oh yes, too seriously—one could not help but feel that the real danger was in the ideological loss of the war, and that the place of all those in the opinion-forming professions was wherever they could best serve to underline the issues of the war.

Hollywood could be such a place. I considered myself lucky,



for during the first months of the war I was working on a script that under the guise of comedy recalled democratic ideas. But the studio's wise men assured me that the film would never be shot. (They proved right.) And to remain in Hollywood, even to write films that stimulated war effort, was somehow to separate oneself from the mainstream of the people's expe-rience. I felt that I had to experience the war if I was going to be of any use as a writer, afterward. To get an active assignment at my age was not going to prove easy. Like so many others in those days I went to Washington to seek my place in the war.

* * *

Washington was crawling with friends from Chicago who were prospecting the agencies. During the days I rushed from Agriculture to Facts and Figures, from WPB to Pentagon, I hounded down rumors of the formation of an OWI, filled in papers volunteering for officer training in the army, the navy, the marines.

There was a nest of our friends, all psychologists, in an opinion-sampling bureau that operated out of Agriculture but really worked for WPB and was allocated to the War Manpower Commission with personnel borrowed from Swarthmore; they said I could go roaming around the country doing intensive opinion depth interviews, thus I could serve the inmost mechanisms of democracy with a recording machine, helping the people's wishes to become integrated with government action. Or, at one point I heard of a service that wanted someone familiar with Jerusalem, but the chief explained that in the situation a Jew would be the last person he would send there. Now I was tipped off that the newly created super-secret OSS wanted ex-reporters for certain missions.

I was given a secret telephone number and told to ask for Dick and say that Bill had given me the number. This led to numerous ramifications and finally literally back to our own attic for it turned out that Izzy, a New American who was occupying the attic, had just been transferred from Agricultural

opinion-sifting to this hush-hush service which was embarking on a high-level European opinion-sifting operation. He presented my name and qualifications and reported back that I was just the type, I could practically order my cloak and dagger. The next afternoon I was to meet his chief, but when I arrived my friend wore a long face. Did I know a lawyer named Duggan from Chicago? I shook my head. "But he knows you," Izzy insisted. He posted me where I could watch a certain door. Presently someone bounded out of it. "Know him?" asked my fellow conspirator. I still was in the dark. "He's blocked you. Says you're a red." But that was baffling too, as several known communists, even ex-fighters from Spain, had been admitted into the service. We gave up on that one.

In the meantime the OWI had been formed. There was to be a film section. I was routed to the office of a fast-talking, bouncing little fellow, a kind of Washington Billy Rose named Arch Mercey. Mercey was the righthand man to Lowell Mellett who was the righthand man to Roosevelt whom I began to picture as an oriental god with windmill arms all on the right side. Mercey was always to be found telephoning, holding his hand over the mouthpiece of one phone while talking into another while making spot decisions for people stepping in and out of his office while giving two or three visitors different lines of entry to the proper avenue of approach to the channels that led to the desired operation. Did I know anybody in WPB or WMC or OPA? Our objective was to concretize visual informational material for the various war agencies on the level of public consumption. Could I take a crew and shoot a film?

Now came an interlude of frantic activity. The war suddenly released me from the responsibility to be a writer, to be a good Jew, to be anything but a man in motion. For nearly two years, until we came into Europe and I made contact with the remnants of the Jewish population, I was under no special pressure from my Jewish self. I was in war work which I hoped would lead to the front, and though I didn't inwardly believe it, I shared in the general wish-dream that the war was in some obscure way going to solve anti-Semitism, among the world's other problems. Besides, my activity during this time was of the sort in which a Jew could feel accepted; I was in a crowd of documentary film-makers drawn from the liberal vanguard.



My first film was to show the public how America was organizing its total energy in the war: how the tremendous labor needs would be met in volunteer fashion without regimentation, how the population would be shifted through job-attraction and self-propulsion and no regimentation to the desired centers, how temporary housing would spring up, how women would replace men in the factories without regimentation, how the same feminine hands that assembled a pack of bridge cards would assemble radio parts, how their children would be cared for in convenient nurseries, how skills would be rapidly taught, how intelligent workers including Negroes would be upgraded, how racial discrimination would be eliminated, how employers and labor unions would co-operate, facilitate, expedite. All this would be explained in a ten-minute film so that every American would know his or her place in the great pattern of the war.

I became one of those government agency boys always on the trains the planes or chasing across the country in stationwagons, filming the air plants, the food markets, the trailer parks, Willow Run, Seattle, the arsenals, the training camps, the marshalling yards, your army pass is okay but we can't let you in we've got navy stuff too I don't care if you're government everybody is government, the shipyards, Newport, Brooklyn, the housing projects, Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, Oswego, Chicago, the victory gardens, getting back to New York and putting the picture together and recutting and taking it to Washington and then back to New York to change the commentary, we must be informative but not entertaining, our deal with Hollywood is no entertainment in government films, and is it on the hour from New York to Washington and on the half-hour from Washington or vice versa, and the dismal Webster Hotel opposite the film section on Forty-fifth Street, the hotel rooms in Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, Minneapolis, waking up wondering what city am I in?

There was the film on army food. If ever a man had to eat his words, I was that man a few years later at the front with nothing but K rations. Once in Germany when a crowd of us in a jeep were littering the autobahn with inedible soy biscuits, a GI mentioned having been shown that film about the K ration during his training; I didn't dare admit I had made it.

But nevertheless what emerged was the goodnatured surge of

America, in every war plant, in New Jersey, New Orleans, in the ugly Willow Run trailer camps, everywhere people were quickly willing. Amongst the Mormons working on Sundays to load heavy roadmakers for the Pacific, amongst the young married women working in the Chicago packing plants while their husbands were in the army, amongst the aircraft workers in Seattle paying triple for scarce meat, there was a touching good will that made one feel they were all truly convinced that good would come to the world out of the war.

And as a film-maker I learned that everyone could respond, that everyone could be, before the camera. After the war, in filming in Palestine and all over Europe, this proved equally true. Perhaps people know how to be before the camera from having seen so many films, but I rather felt it was because the camera came to them in their own lives, and they instantly recognized that it wanted only reality, and were at ease.

To me as a writer, the camera was an extension of my own medium; it provided a kind of urgent shorthand. In times when there was a need to communicate directly, I was writing with a camera.

The work in those months was exhausting, and what thought I had centered on schemes for getting overseas, to the war. Every week, Arch Mercey was cooking up another combination that would take us with our Eyemos and our stationwagons to North Africa, to the jungle airfields, to Murmansk, to China. Then suddenly the film section was folding up and Arch Mercey was sitting with three telephones placing his boys all over Washington while wondering out loud whether he should spot himself in WPB or the Coast Guard, there were angles, a fellow could really operate out of the Coast Guard.

A bombardier named Meyer Levin, who had become the Jewish hero of the war, had been killed. I tried to get accepted in the same service. At last I thought I would get to the war. I suddenly stopped running. And in the hiatus, while I was waiting, I wrote a play, something about the Negro problem in Washington; it didn't come off, but there was an important moment for me in its writing.

I had been running, running for more than a year, had at last escaped the "having to write", and with the best of excuses—the war. In my few weeks of respite I went out to the



country and managed to complete a draft of the play. I remember the morning when I wrote the last line and stepped out of the house: I had so great, so exquisite a sense of achievement and relief, I said to myself—Even if the work is no good, even if it is mediocre, remember this moment for yourself, remember there is no other way for you to achieve this sense of peace, of self-justification, except in carrying out whatever writing is in your mind. All your other reasons are subordinate; all your talk of social purpose in writing, of the function of the writer in society, all this is embroidery; the fundamental necessity is to reach this moment, that's what drives you to writing. Nothing else can give you this peace. This is the fate of being a writer, and it is just as true for the bad as for the good, which is unfortunate. This is all you will ever really get out of it, and if it has to be, it is enough. Whenever you stray into other jobs, whenever things load up on you, remember the pure pleasure of this moment when a man walks away from his work-table saying, There, I've done it. It's finished. I'm being what I was intended to be.

And the same goes for living as a Jew.

All the embroideries, all the theories, are as nothing beside the simple identification, the release that comes in sitting of an evening amongst a group of Jews, perhaps exchanging jokes about the goyim.

This is not always easy to remember.

* * *

I couldn't become a bombardier, I was over age. There was talk of writers being sent abroad for frontline propaganda work, leaflet writing in the foxholes. I would be shipped to England in preparation for the invasion.

There was of course the training period in the luxurious Long Island mansion where all of us down to the last stenographer were taught the Jerome Weidman automatic three-point system of composing combat leaflets and how to print the war-winning leaflets on a pocketsize printing press. There we would be—a

forward propaganda team in a foxhole, with our shortwave radio, our press, our team of writers, and one by one the whole team would be picked off by snipers and our little stenographer even though the sole survivor would be able to carry on writing terrific Weidman system leaflets and printing them herself and encasing them in leaflet shells and firing them at the enemy causing the enemy troops to run to the nearest allied post to surrender.

In one of the courses a detective-story writer, pacing the platform, told us exactly what to do when we found ourselves on a speeding train and saw, in the corridor, an individual who had to be eliminated. The thing to do was to open the door and push the character off the swiftly moving train. This sage also instructed us in code writing, how to hear through a wall, and how to make a sleeping person turn over on his other side when we wanted the documents under his pillow. One wafted a handkerchief gently above his face.

Our graduating exercise was the publication on our portable press of a news-sheet announcing our landing to the inhabitants of a town in Britanny; I couldn't quite understand why they would need a newspaper to tell them we had landed, if any of them remained around alive, nor why we would have to propagandize our French allies instead of the enemy. Indeed, a number of these little problems cropped up in the operation later on.

In London, the pubs around Grosvenor Square were filled with OSS, OWI and Signal Corps writers waiting wistfully for a chance to undermine enemy morale. I hung around the "basic news" room begging to be sent on assignments.

One day a young girl from the press service of the Free French Forces was assigned as liaison to our newsroom. It was Tereska Szwarc, grown up, and a soldier. Her father and mother too were in London; Marek had been given leave by the Polish command, and was working at his sculpture.

Then one day I was summoned to the publications office. At last there was a real combat assignment for me. It was to be the first of a series of booklets being prepared for the invasion of France.



The subject? Movies.

We would tell the French about the movies they had missed during the war, and how they would soon see these wonderful American films again, they would even see *Gone With The Wind.*

I had left Hollywood to win the war with words.

But presently we psychological warriors were assembled for yet another course. This one was all important, for it was a three-day aptitude test designed to determine our roles at the front. There were to be written and oral examinations, and finally, there would be an obstacle course. This seemed the crucial point. My desperate desire to get to the war became fixed now, upon getting over the obstacle course in record time. For if I lagged, I would never be assigned to front line duty with leaflet bombs.

Each of us was handed a printed instruction sheet. It said we would first have to cross a stream, and if we fell in, we would be eaten by alligators. If we got across we would find ourselves in a jungle. To get lost in the jungle would mean being devoured by wild animals. If we found our way out of the jungle, we would come to a rapids. There, we were in danger of being swirled over a cliff and smashed to bits. The whole course was being timed.

My turn came. Behind our Nissen hut was a little ravine. It was bridged by a log. An instructor with a stop-watch and a sheaf of forms stood by. There was not a second to lose. I started to walk across the slippery log, lost my balance, fell, desperately caught my arms and legs around the log, swinging under it like a honeybear. I knew I was done for, finished, eliminated, I might have been predestined to write the most compelling leaflets in the war, but the Germans would never surrender to my blandishments now. Summoning all my strength, I endeavored to progress upsidedown on all fours along the slippery log; I got halfway across the ravine, lost my hold, and plopped down to the open maws of the waiting alligators.

Above me, I saw the instructor solemnly marking my first demise on his chart.

I lay there in defeat telling myself, You damn fool you're flunking out of sheer overanxiety, out of your usual habit of

rushing into things, now think, THINK, that's really what this obstacle course is designed for—to test your intelligence, not your ability to balance on a slippery log. Oh why weren't you ever a boy scout! You see, the common virtues pay in the long run, now you're getting it for your snotty sheenie intellectualism! Reading Thackeray instead of walking backyard fences!

Then, hoping that a display of determination would redound to my credit, I scrambled out of the ravine and asked if I could start over? The instructor nodded, and this time I seated myself astraddle the log and worked my way to the other side, successfully. A piece of rope dangled above me. I grabbed it, and pulled myself upright. Now I faced a wire and rope bridge over a bottomless chasm. With pounding heart, conquering my flagpole-sitter heritage of vertigo, I walked the length of the wire, and at the further end I saw another rope dangling, this time just out of reach. The apparent technique was to make a Tarzan leap, seize the rope, and swing by it across the crocodile-infested swamp below, making sure to jump down clear of the tape-mark that indicated the limited range of the crocodiles.

—Test of muscular co-ordination, I told myself. Also of nerve. Don't hesitate. Go right at it.

So I lunged and caught the rope, but I had never in my youth built a trapeze in the barn to practice for running away and joining a circus, and as a result I now failed to give myself enough of a shove-off to carry me all the way across the swamp. I dangled, swinging in an ever-diminishing arc.—No use, you're a dying pendulum, I told myself. Do your best on the next forward swing, jump!

So I jumped and landed four inches inside the tape-line, and there I died a second death, sinking soundlessly until the eternal mud closed over my head, while a crocodile gnawed at my leg. Hell, how could I hope ever to carry a typewriter into a French village?

The inexorable tally-marker now confronted me from the other side of the tape-line, and on a knoll behind him I beheld the members of the class who had already gone through the ordeal. But not a hint, not a signal came from them. They stood on the knoll, an immutable chorus of supernatural spectators.

I dragged myself out of the swamp and ran blindly forward, realizing that I had by now fallen far behind in time. But



suddenly I was out in the open—alas, I had missed the jungle marker and was therefore certainly lost in the jungle. I suffered my third death in the jaws of a tiger.

Another check was made on the chart, and the instructor remarked in a pale English-tea tone, rather like an offstage oracle, "Look behind you."

Gawking around, I discovered an arrow painted on one of the trees I had by-passed. I went back and followed the trail to the edge of the rushing torrent. This was a concrete basin about six feet wide. The branch of a tree projected over it. Beside me lay a coiled rope.

"When you reach the rushing torrent," the orientation form had said, "use whatever means you find to cross it, but bear in mind that your comrades have to cross, after you."

The rope, obviously, was the means. And at least I had recalled that crucial point about my comrades. The psychological warrior behind me, also running away from the enemy, would not be lost through fault of mine.

The rope would have to be slung over the projecting branch so that the free end would swing back to me. Catching it, I could then swing across the torrent on the doubled rope. Once on the other side I could pull in the rope, coil it, and throw it back for the next man to use. I began making tries with the rope. At each try, down went another tally. Had I been raised as a cowboy, I could now have become a frontline psychological warrior. I must have made fifty tries. Each time, the free end of the rope snapped back almost to my hand as I leaned teetering on the banks of the torrent, reaching for it.

—Test of perseverence, I told myself. Don't give up.

The spectators on the knoll got bored and sprawled on the grass. I tried short lengths and long lengths. Finally I made it. But I was so exhausted, unnerved, anxious, excited, relieved, and despondent that I let go the rope when I landed. It swung back, dangling out of reach in mid-torrent.

—Deserts his comrades.

The results of these tests were a carefully guarded secret. Back in London, I rubbered around the corridor, where the all-important assignments were being made. One day an officer paused and looked at me. "You're Meyer Levin," he declared. "Remember me? Perry Miller."

He had been the leading man in Will Geer's college dramatic club. Now, round-faced and a Harvard professor of literature, he was a captain in OSS. We went out for a beer and recalled the redheaded leading lady and eventually got around to our roles in the great war. I confessed my anxiety over the results of the obstacle course. Perry, it turned out, had access to the fateful record.

The next day we met in the pub. Perry had read the summary on my chart. "Your outstanding characteristic," he quoted solemnly, "is a lack of perseverance. You are also deficient in initiative."

* * *

D-Day was approaching. Everyone around Eisenhowerplatz explained how according to the moon it had to be within the next three weeks or it would be put off until next year. A new word came into circulation: bigoted. People asked if you were bigoted and it you looked blank and didn't even know what the word meant, you were nobody. In the Little French Club, celebrities were ignored in favor of silentious individuals about whom the whisper would spread, "He's been bigoted." In the Greek restaurant called The White Tower, where little OWI girls tried to get tables on the second floor near the *Time* and *Life* correspondents, people were rated according to the grapevine news of what embarkation date they had drawn. And if you didn't get across the channel on D or D plus One at the latest, you were nobody, you had missed the war.

It was rumored that a super-select team of frontline psychological warriors would be carried along on D-Day. I couldn't hope for that. I was assigned to the rear, on a press team that was to revive French newspapers. What the French would be doing while we were running their papers I couldn't imagine. However, my team-mates said we had one of the best deals in the war. A free ride.

Presently our unit of rear psychological warriors, consisting of about fifty men, proceeded to France. In a formidable column,



we rolled into Cherbourg. There we took over a group of houses whose walls were appropriately bullet-pocked, whose mirrors were fittingly smashed.

Our headquarters had been the German propaganda center. Much of the enemy stock remained in the supply shed in the courtyard. I lifted the lid off a huge crate of pamphlets: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

And my only permitted service so far, toward counteracting this, had been to write a booklet on Hollywood pictures.

* * *

Our press-team assignment had developed as expected. The French were competently running their own paper in Cherbourg. Presently there were five press-teams sitting around playing gin rummy.

I thought up a new way to get to the war. Our propaganda broadcasts from London needed on-the-spot material. What they could pick out of the regular news services did not always fit our propaganda needs. However there was no place for a reporter on the PWD table of organization. This led to quite a struggle, and in the end the commanding officer of our team announced that the table of organization had been amended to include two reporters, Sam Boal and myself. But we were limited to the rear area. And we had no transportation.

There was Harry, the PWD movie distributor, who ventured forth daily to carry films to the liberated French populace. I could hitch on his jeep. One day while waiting for Harry in the battered town hall of St. Mère Eglise, I caught part of a conversation between a goateed Frenchman and a town official. The goateed one was an architect commissioned to report on damages to churches and public monuments in the war area. He was begging for gas.

I captured the architect. Allies Speed Plans for Rebuilding Damaged Historic Churches! I could get a jeep for a week on the strength of such a survey. I had him include several towns in the forward area in our itinerary. And presently, with special passes,

a photographer, permits, trip tickets and mission orders, and with the architect tucked in the back of the jeep, I was at last going to the war.

After finishing the rear area churches, and sending our architect back to Cherbourg, we came to the region of St. Lo, where standstill fighting had lasted more than a week. Undoubtedly, the photographer and I had front fever. We had to feel the war's breath on our cheeks, we wanted desperately to find something useful to do.

We began to pass farmyards with dead cattle with their feet in the air, sometimes a dead horse. Now we were in the war. To the very end, dead animals always seemed an incongruity to me, and I imagine this is due to our idea of war even from childhood games, from all we have ever read of wars, perpetuating the notion that war is personalized combat, that a man or an animal may be hurt only when an adversary points a stone, an arrow, a bullet at him. No matter how much we know of war, we cannot seem to rid ourselves of this notion, to quite accept our own knowledge that casualty in modern war comes from metal flying around at random, impersonally directed, and that the enemy is almost never seen, and perhaps this is why anyone who is hit is always surprised at being hit, and why a hit animal seems a mistake.

Now a couple of GI's passed, going the other way, and they said we'd better stop at the CP in the graveyard, beyond there the road came under fire.

We weren't familiar with war terms and were totally baffled by the myriad of little signs along the road, with their fantastic code names, Iodine Forward, Isabelle CP, Gargantua Rear. But we could guess that CP meant a commandpost.

A rifleman in a foxhole dug beside a grave waved us into the cemetery and indicated a mausoleum, where we would find the CP. A dozen steps led down into a family crypt that made an excellent dugout. The scene was a scene from the war in Spain, and was the same as the hundreds of commandposts from then on, always on the floor what first looked like a heap of clothing proved to be a tangle of sleeping men, always somebody squatting with a field telephone saying a series of tired okays, and a captain



or a lieutenant with a cellophane mapcase over a box-end, greeting correspondents with still goodnatured weariness because a correspondent is a tie with home; always the young officer carefully explains his position on the detail map which the correspondent never quite understands, and the officer profers some crackers out of an open K ration, and a drink if he's found something to drink.

Things were quiet just now, they said, they'd lost two men in the night, the road from here was hot, Jerry was looking right down your throat, be damn careful, don't go beyond the café on the corner, that's our last outpost.

Dodging along the street, we made it to the café. A couple of boys were holding, there, amidst strewn-around chairs and broken mirrors and the junk of half-eaten meals. The boys were jumpy, unshaven. We took their pictures, and we went out the back way along an alley that opened into the town square.

It was utterly deserted, with broken branches and knocked-down twigs and leaves littering the street where no one had recently passed; this was no-man's land. For some crazy reason perhaps to justify our presence, Grebb photographed the church steeple. We went back the way we had come and there was now a soldier lying dead on the street that led to the graveyard.

What the hell were we doing there? If we had been hurt, killed, what for? No, we were guilty of this excursion, and yet we felt that someone should be doing this, someone should give an eyewitness description of St. Lo, the pivot of battle. We felt it was our proper job, though forbidden to us. Then we took a lateral road, paralleling what we supposed was the front. Presently at a crossroads we encountered a tremendous movement of traffic. Tanks, halftracks, jeeps, scoutcars, were moving down the road bumper to bumper. We decided to get lost, and turned into this lane of traffic.

Within a quarter of an hour we had reached the war. The lane of vehicles continued moving forward, but part of it spilled out over fields, and in the fields stood rows of tanks, firing. Not far ahead was a smudge of smoke streaked with fire, a burning village. The Germans were there.

Our armored column halted. We left our jeepdriver in the line, while we hurried over the field. The men stared at our SHAEF insignia as though to say what the hell is GHQ doing up

here? Grebb, in a state of exalted excitement, was photographing everything: tank-treads over half-squashed cattle in a shellhole; a dead GI with his rifle just fallen out of his hand, a snapshot of his girl taped to the gunstock; a batch of fifteen-year-old German prisoners. We half ran forward to keep up with our jeep as our column moved again, detouring three knocked-out German tanks that blocked the road. One tank was burning. The fire in the other was ended, the charred body of a man slumped from the turret, the torso of another lay alongside the road. We climbed inside the third tank and found a set of souvenir chinaware that the German had been carrying away. Further on, a fourth tank lay completely overturned, from an airbomb. We photographed the tanks. I saw them already in a surrender leaflet—a chain of pictures of the enemy's heaviest armor, under each a line saying how it had been killed, by air, by shellfire, by bazookas, and the top slogan: Your thickest iron won't protect you. Yes, we were doing our proper business, for this couldn't be made any time but now; when the battle had passed the material would be cold.

The GI'S seemed to be in the same mood as we, as though out of themselves. This is it, this is it, they muttered, now we are going someplace. Ahead of us we could see the fighterplanes diving like glittering needles stitching down, the men said the planes had hurt some of our boys, even killed a general just a way's back, working in too close to our lines, yet the men weren't bitter over this, they were in that pure elation of war that explains men in war, when nobody gives a bloody damn for his limbs or his life, when the great forward fever has hold of all.

We didn't know whether this was the everyday of it for this was our first contact with action; it was clear this was a breakthrough of some kind, and it seemed to us that this must be the big breakthrough, but we were cautious about accepting this idea, having never seen action. We moved along with the column, now and again leaving our jeep to run forward, and now we saw a figure bobbing and darting from the background of the smoking town, running toward us, hands in the air. The German reached the first armored scout car in the field; a reconn man stood in the turret talking into a mike, spelling out something, Baker Able Charlie. The German began babbling that he was an oberst, a lieutenant, but the soldiers waved him over to us, saying they



didn't understand him and anyway they couldn't bother with prisoners. In my rudimentary German I started an interrogation.

"Enough, I have it up to here, the war!" he gasped, putting his hand to chin-level. "I was in Stalingrad, I endured it, but this, we have never seen anything like this material, nothing can stand against this, it is foolish to continue."

His surrender speech sounded as thought it had been composed of all of our propaganda directives, pure, and I could hear it on the broadcast with his name, unit, rank, I could see it in print, good, this was our business, we had found the right place at last. Grebb was photographing him with that half-dazed look of the surrender moment when a man isn't sure which stories are going to be fulfilled—that prisoners are starved and shot, or that prisoners are entertained with movies every night. We sent him toward the rear, and we stumbled on with the column. A wounded man was lying beside the road, "Polski, Varsovie," he kept groaning. A slave laborer, from a farm. We photographed him being loaded onto a first-aid jeep, his foreleg splinted. Allies Rescue Nazi Slaves. Then we were near the front of the column. We entered a hamlet and there was an ancient church ablaze, with GI's pulling down the burning doors to break the conflagration. Triumphantly we photographed this scene—our assignment. It was dusk now, and we turned back.

In Cherbourg, I hurried to our team-commander, having to disturb him in his quarters. We had seen a big breakthrough, I said, we had a tubful of material. My head was filled with broadcasts, slogans, surrender speeches, the tank leaflet, a leaflet headed Why Die In The Last Days Of The War (which, I learned much later, proved to be the second most effective of leaflet slogans) and I wanted to flash the material to London. "All right, get it through the field censor," he said.

There was a press camp censor in Cherbourg. "Yah, we got all the latest poop," he said, "same as the field units."

Late the next morning I was called before the major. Why had I violated orders?

"We got lost," I began.

He waved all that aside. Last night he had specifically told me to go to a field censor. Why had I tried to get around his order?

I saw my material lying on his desk. And it was the only

eye-witness story of the St. Lo breakthrough. A few days later I was called into a sort of unmartial courtmartial. The chiefs sat around the table. The atmosphere was one of pained reprimand from the civilian master-psychological-warriors, and exasperation from the military men. To my astonishment I learned that the only concrete grievance was still my having gone to the censor around the corner instead of to a censor twenty miles away.

Beneath, I felt a resentment over matters that couldn't very well be discussed. Here was a cosey wine-sampling set-up where gentlemen could enjoy war. Why couldn't I let things alone? Why had I bothered everybody for weeks, to give me something to do? Why did I have to go to the front? Why did I have to be such a goddam eager-beaver meatball?

I was ordered back to London.

By now the Paris fever was mounting. The Germans were broken. Paris would be the great climax. I had caught the fever the worst way. Taking part in the liberation of Paris became the symbol for having lived in the fullest events or our time—it would be the end of the struggle of our epoch, the liberation of Paris would be the restoration of Ethiopia and the liberation of Madrid and the death of Hitlerism, all in one.

And instead I had to return to London. The mere mechanism for getting back to England was tortuous. All the apparatus had been designed to get people into Europe; nobody seemed to know what sort of orders to make out, where to get signatures and countersignatures that would enable a man to board a vessel and return to England.

Finally a jeep deposited me on Omaha Beach and I stumbled through office after office acquiring clearances, I boarded a Dutch transport which was unloading troops.

I felt terribly sorry for myself. I rehearsed my actions; whatever usefulness I had wasn't worth, to them, the irritation caused by my overeagerness. I had got what I deserved for my blasted righteousness. Every act of my life now seemed to have ended in this sort of failure to belong. I was blocked again, and clearly by myself.

As I stood there on the deck, I heard my name repeated. A



GI had noticed the tag on my Valpak. "You Meyer Levin the writer?" he asked. "*The Old Bunch? Citizens?*"

A feeling of partial reprieve came over me. The boy shouldered his dufflebag. "You landing with us?"

"No, I'm going back," I mumbled.

He waved, and was gone.

I went down to my stateroom, and as I was carried back to England in the empty boat I wondered how it was that all my vaunted integration had dissolved. For all my labor in the last years to fit myself into the world pattern, I was still a little member of my clan, overanxious, self-centered, insecure, the eternal bright and troublesome Jew. As soon as I got into the world among the goyim, I messed up.

Paris fell.

In London, little Tereska was married to a boy who had given up his commission in another unit so as to get into Leclerc's armored division as a plain soldier. Boys like that had liberated Paris.

My own divorce came through at this time. As I mooned around London, I wondered whether the Jewish factor had been the root of the marriage trouble too, but in reviewing this relationship I felt it was not the essential flaw, though it had certainly counted, for in myself there was, unavoidably, the primitive sense of having violated a tribal injunction. It was an injunction intellectually recognized as invalid, but nevertheless its force carried on in me from childhood.

Paris had fallen, and it was clear by now that the war was not over. No one seemed to know what to do with me.

Surely, I thought, it was because I didn't know in myself where I belonged. I hadn't been able to fit into "their" world. It was perhaps not yet the place for me. Though I had imagined, through my books, that I had worked out the Jewish equation for myself, I was still unquiet. And now I saw a task for myself as a Jew.

For there was one story, in Europe, which I was peculiarly

fitted to tell. It was the story of the fate of the Jews. Now at last as the continent was opened we would be able to discover the facts behind the gruesome rumors of mass slaughter and slavery that had been coming out of Europe.

Together with this—if I could get a job as a correspondent—I could tell of the Jews fighting in the war. For the Pacific battle hero, my own namesake, was already forgotten, already there were little wisecracks and legends about Jews finding soft spots behind the lines, Jews in the commissaries and in public relations jobs and in transport. The second part of my task, then, would be to pick up stories of fighting Jews, stories that might not otherwise be emphasized.

I went to George Backer, who was in London with the OWI, and was also a director of the Overseas News Agency. He arranged for my release from the Psychological Warfare Division. Within a few weeks, I was an accredited correspondent, and on my way to Paris. There began a period when I felt that I functioned extremely well, as a human being who was doing what he was meant to do.



PART TWO

# EUROPE : The Witnesses

FROM the beginning I realized I would never be able to write the story of the Jews of Europe. This tragic epic cannot be written by a stranger to the experience, for the survivors have an augmented view which we cannot attain; they lived so long so close with death that on a moral plane they are like people who have acquired the hearing of a whole range of tones outside normal human hearing.

What I sent out as the armies progressed were the day-to-day stories: how many Jewish survivors remained in Paris, in Cologne, how many Jews had been there before the war, what notables were dead; I reported whether the synagogues survived or were burned, in Strasburg, Brussells, Antwerp, Luxembourg; through all of Germany, and on as far as Prague I sought the remnants of Israel. As the concentration camps were liberated I hastened to them; I sent the fundamental news, as a legman, an elementary reporter gathering what I could from every source, from every survivor, and no clue was too small but I felt obliged to go, to listen, and find out. Most of this material appeared as bits of anonymous news trickling into the historic stream, forming the basis for the computation of aid needed, for the estimates of clothing, of medical and psychiatric help needed, for the solid work that was to fill the years that followed.

What I did at the time could have been done by any other competent reporter but I was glad that the task fell to me, satisfied that my energy melted unidentified into the great flow, the organism of society. I couldn't pause to be concerned because

much of what I sent never saw print at all, or appeared only in the Yiddish press or in obscure Anglo-Jewish weeklies. If some items came only in mimeographed form to the desk of an executive of the American Joint Distribution Committee, they still had their function. Other items found their way into the general press.

As I groped in the first weeks, beginning to apprehend the monstrous shape of the story I would have to tell, I knew already that I would never penetrate its heart of bile, for the magnitude of this horror seemed beyond human register. My comprehension seemed to me like an electrical instrument whose needle has only a limited range, while the charge goes far beyond. Occasionally I could tell a story that gave a tangential glimpse into the hearts of the survivors. Some day a teller would arise from amongst themselves.

While awaiting assignment to a forward-area press camp, I began work in Paris. It is curious that even those of us who do not profess religion find ourselves always turning first to religious institutions as folk-symbols for our people. Thus in each city it was the synagogue that I first sought, as a channel to survivors. And so I went to the great synagogue in the Rue de la Victoire and there I picked up a little shrunken Jew who guided me through the ghetto streets while pouring into my ears the stories and stories that I was to hear without end in the next years.

His tales were interspersed with place-names which I had not yet heard, and the world had not yet heard, but he assumed they were familiar to me, for what Jew had not lived with them in the forefront of his consciousness? Drancy, Treblinka, Ravensbrook, Auschwitz.

Through Drancy, a prison barrack on the outskirts of Paris, the Jews of France had passed toward Auschwitz.

My guide led me up broken stairs to backroom kitchens where the survivors were eating their public soup. The massive Jewish organizations, the Joint and HIAS and ORT with their social workers and their trained staffs had not yet begun to move in; the mere bones of the community structure were still to be re-



set before one could find out what nerves and muscles were still functioning.

But the misery of one soup kitchen is like that of another; from Paris to Budapest I was to see the same dark sallow faces and the same ladles in the black cauldrons and the same soup, and the same people huddled in worn overcoats crawling off home with their little pots of soup, ex-doctors, ex-lawyers, ex-clerks, ex-bosses, ex-teachers, broken, broken, and they inevitably appeared to me in terms of my people of the west side of Chicago, people of *The Old Bunch*; they were children of the same parents.

No one wants to hear their stories any more, and I am sick of telling their stories, for there is no issue from their dreary tales even though we say happy ending in Israel; and yet some things must be said or said again here, for they have not been enough understood. One can enumerate the survivors and determine the proportion to be taken to Israel and the proportion who want to resettle in France and try to get back their businesses, and the proportion who want to go to Canada or to the United States, Brazil where they have a third cousin; one may approximate their mental ills. But they all have death inside.

It isn't a fourth of the Bulgarian Jews and a fifth of the Polish Jews and a third of the French who survived; they all have death inside.

In that first week of confusion I began to see a little of what had been done to those who nominally survived, through the stories they brought me against each other. I began to sense the system of moral as well as physical annihilation that the Germans had carried across Europe. For until then I had known only the massive horror—that the Germans had rounded up the Jews and carted them off and burned them. But what they did was not so simple.

They came and told the Jews to organize themselves, to register every soul in their community. And from Paris to Lodz the stories were the same: the first horror came here, the first division in hatred. For there were those who cried No, it's a trick, not one soul must register, not one Jew must take a post with the German authorities; and there were always those who said—We have no choice; some will be saved this way. There

were also the young who said—Let us go down fighting. But it was a long time before they were heard.

And when it was all over, who could tell? There were those who had hidden for years in cellars, who emerged half demented and tormented and cried, Death to the members of the committee who collaborated with the Germans, death to all those who gave them the population lists! And there were those who had served on such committees, who swore they had risked their lives daily to save the last remnant. They told how they had rescued this or that group of children by warning the underground to spirit them away, the day before they were to be deported. And survivors of the underground arose to fling bitter accusations at them—for every group that had been saved, another group of children had been yielded up to the destroyer. The underground fighters cried out against the committee workers who had circulated freely with the precious vile card that made them immune from arrest. And the collaborators retorted with the names of entire committees, arrested and burned to death despite their cards of immunity.

In the concentration camps and to the very doors of the ovens it was the same, some were betrayers, and some truly hoped they could save a last few, but in the end all, all were corroded with a mortal distrust. How many ghetto trials of conscience, what total agony had gone into this struggle for the survival of the minute remainder? To be one out of a hundred, one out of a thousand. In Paris, each bed in the Rothschild Hospital had been a momentary castle of immunity, and over each bed was the struggle of conscience, of force, of connections and of bribes, and every such struggle took place under the weight of the knowledge that nevertheless the SS commander, to complete the quota of a deportation train, might at any moment march through the hospital pointing to a row of beds with a riding whip—take those. No, this was a complex of moral horror that would never in all history be resolved.

And in the heart of each surviving individual was a pyramid of guilt. This too I came to perceive in those first weeks in Paris, and nothing of all the horrors I afterwards saw erased the first story that came to me, for it was the archtype, it contained the reverberations of all the self-tortures, all the remorse of every soul that survived, and this horror in the living has seemed



to me greater than the physical horror of the six million dead, for in the dead there was no more gnawing doubt.

For to live, each survivor had somewhere to have betrayed someone, through leaving. By will or by chance or by force, each had at some instant been separated from a father, a brother, a wife, a child. Out of this came an ever-present sense of guilt that flowered in suicides or was counterbalanced by a devouring sense of responsibility for having survived. Each who found himself spared by what seemed to be a succession of miracles was haunted forever by the unanswerable Why. Why I? What must I do to pay for this that I was spared? What made me leave the house on an errand just before the Gestapo arrived? Why was I unhurt when I jumped from the train, while the others were shot by the guard? Surely this is a sign that I was spared for something. There, on that boxcar transport when only four of us crawled out alive, there in the march when only six of us arrived at the end—it is a sign.

Each, then, feels a compulsion to turn saint, to turn prophet, or a justification in using every means of violence and guile to continue his survival in a world that somehow does not realize that his individual survival is a supernatural work, that he has been elected for a special fate. Or else, the survivor feels a ghastly doubt and wonder—could his remaining alive be a mistake of fate itself? since there seems now to be no reason for his life after all. And in the hideous dragging existence of the after years, some wonder whether it was not a special punishment, to have survived.

The first insight I had into the guilt of survival was from a man who came to see me at the Scribe Hotel in Paris. He had heard in the Jewish quarter that I was a representative of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency—for sometimes, amongst my own people, I used this name instead of the Overseas News Agency. This man came to the hotel saying he wanted only for me to listen to his story because he needed to tell it to someone from outside.

He had been a teacher in a school of the Torah in Tchenstokhov, and his name was not unknown in Jewish academic circles, even as far as New York. I will call him Glickson.

When the Germans began to herd Jews into the closed ghetto communities, and then to remove trainfuls daily for "work",

Glickson was one of the few who believed the dark rumor that the "work" was death. This alone was a gigantic step, for even to the very last, few believed, so difficult is it to assimilate so complete a horror, so strong is the will in every human being to dream that death is impossible for him and that in his own case something will intervene, if even at the last instant.

There were rumors that the ghetto of Warsaw would be safest, rumors rising perhaps from the sense of safety in numbers. Glickson took his wife and little daughter to Warsaw. He was trying, in the meanwhile, every whispered avenue of escape, writing to friends in America, to organizations in Geneva, risking himself outdoors against sudden street-raids to run to supposed agents for South American countries, hoping for a place on a group visa. He was writing to all the organizations for Palestine, never knowing whether his letters arrived, he was trying every last hole of escape.

The daily quota collection began in the Warsaw ghetto. Glickson set a date as the last beyond which he could not risk to remain. Of all the letters, documents, cables he had sent abroad—no answer came. To remain in Warsaw was now highly dangerous. He smuggled his wife and child out of Warsaw, and reached the ghetto of Tchenstokhov again. But there too the human levies had begun. He heard that the ghetto of Lodz would be eliminated later, for the Germans were employing Lodz Jews in war production. Glickson planned to move to Lodz. But just then his little daughter fell ill with meningitis. She could not be moved.

Every day, at dawn, Glickson slipped out to the railway station and counted how many freight cars had been brought for the day's deportation of Jews. Then he calculated how many would be taken to fill the cars. From this, he calculated how many buildings or blocks would be evacuated that day. On a map of the ghetto that he had drawn, Glickson blotted off each day's deportations, for he had perceived that the Germans were moving systematically, house by house. And he perceived that he had some days of grace, for he lived in the furthest corner. Thus he was able to formulate an equation, computing the rate of his daughter's recovery against the rate of the German consumption of the ghetto. When they reached the corner of his block, the girl would have to be moved.



And behold, in the meantime he had risked his last savings, handing them over to a passport agent for a South American country. And through the remaining few streets in the ghetto the news blazed that a group of fifteen passports had been issued. The Glicksons were on the list. With only a few days to spare, he and his wife carried the sick girl to a train and, with their rare papers, they left Poland.

Thus far they had succeeded; they were among the few saved by their own miraculous persistence. Their papers carried them as far as France, and they were interned in Vittel in the southern resort area, in a camp for all those who had emigration documents.

Although they were behind barbed wire, their camp was in a resort town, and it was not difficult to exchange a few possessions for food.

But then the trains began to roll from their camp, too, back into German Europe. Week after week went by, and their papers were not certified by the Germans. Glickson attempted to make contact with the outside. He was able to come to an arrangement with a Frenchwoman in the town who agreed to take the child into her care. And one night, by means of a bribe, the little girl was smuggled out of the camp to the home of the Frenchwoman. No matter what happened now, mother and father felt that the child might be saved.

Soon afterward, Glickson related to me, they were informed that their hard-bought papers would not be recognized. When their turn came they would be loaded onto a train and taken to the prison outside of Paris, called Drancy—the collection center for Jews in France. From Drancy, the closed trains rolled back eastward to Auschwitz and extermination.

And thus it happened that eventually mother and father were on the death train.

This was not a death train such as I was to hear about later from other survivors, this was not a train of locked boxcars with no water or food, where the living sat on the dead on the way to Auschwitz, nor was it like the shipments from camp to camp when the slaves had been so far brutalized that "a man would kill another for nothing—a gulp of water".

These were still human trains, from the south of France, carrying the escaped ones back into German Europe. Though the

cars were locked and guarded, there were seats, and the deportees had brought provisions. "Some of us had even brought something to drink," Glickson told me, "because we knew it was our last ride, and during the long day of the ride we drank and we became a little hysterical."

"My wife and I said our final goodbye to each other, for we did not know but what we would be separated at the end of the ride. We decided that if there was an opportunity for one of us to escape, at any time, it should be taken, even without the other, for whoever could escape could perhaps find our child again, and help her in this world.

"We divided what little possessions remained to us—a few rings and a little money. In Vittel I had even changed a watch for French money, francs, thinking who knows? My wife had a distant relative in Paris, and she wrote down the address and put it in my pocket, here" —He put his fingers in his outer breast pocket, as if still to touch the bit of paper. "I sometimes wonder if she did this through a premonition. And you see, as I survived, I owe it to that little thought, of my wife's...

" All day we watched for an opportunity to escape. The only hope was to jump through a window, but the guards were there to prevent us. Some of us in the train knew France, and there were those who recognized the scenery and said we were approaching Paris. Our hopes were over."

Then, in the last moments, he had gone to the toilet. There was a small window in the toilet. And the train slowed down. " I debated with myself whether there was time to run back and call my wife. But in that moment the opportunity might be lost. I remembered what we had agreed—if even one could escape— "

He squirmed out of the window, rolled away from the train.

And now I, the writer, am debating whether to suppress a detail which haunted the man, yet which to me seems to distract from the pure moral horror of his guilt. His guilt was in leaving his wife. But with the gruesomeness that only chance knows how to invent, his dilemma was deepened at that moment by the presence of a young woman who had been drinking with them and who found her way at that decisive instant to the toilet window. She too, leaped.

He had not planned it so. He had nothing to do with this woman—this he swore to me. And yet, her presence there was



added fuel for his torment : a second person had managed to get out—might it not have been his wife, in this woman's place?

From the embankment by the rails, they groped their way to a warehouse where they hid. The young woman told him that she spoke French and would help him find his way around Paris. But in the morning she was gone.

In terrible fear, Glickson set out by himself to find the address his wife had given him. He spoke no French, and dreaded that the first person whom he approached in the street might betray him as a foreigner. He walked and walked, hunting for the street. Once, gathering his courage, he showed the bit of paper to a woman. She began a voluble explanation, and he was afraid to show that he did not understand. He smiled his thanks, and went on his way.

At last, on the verge of exhaustion and despair, Glickson was struck by an utterly simple idea. "You can see how it is in such a crisis—your mind seems to freeze so that you are incapable of arriving at the most obvious thought. But at last it came to me— I went into a bookshop and pointed to a guide to Paris. I paid for it with my last money, and as I looked for the name of the street, I realized that my life depended on my finding it."

It was a tiny street on the edge of the town; Glickson found it, and found his wife's cousin, who hid him.

When he had completed the story of his escape, the man looked at me in all his torment. "I have tried in every way to discover a trace of my wife. I know only that the train went to Drancy." I nodded.

"Do you think?" He couldn't finish his question.

I tried to reassure him. He and his wife had made their compact.

There was only one more thing he had to tell me; he brought it out shyly, tentatively, as a man producing what he hopes to be mitigating evidence. "I managed to get in touch with the woman in Vittel, and to bring my little daughter to Paris. She is living in the suburbs, in a very nice home. If you want to see a beautiful Jewish child— ."

I didn't know at that moment that Glickson's story was the

story of every surviving Jew, that what haunted him haunts us all. Yes, even the Jews of America and South Africa and Australia, the Jews who never had to jump from a death train, the Jews who escaped because long ago their forefathers made the journey from Europe in steerage. Their guilt is perhaps lower in intensity, but it is the same. This is the guilt of the living. Among the direct survivors it produced an unrelenting inner struggle that led many, just after liberation, to despair, to suicide.

Very rarely, in the camps later, I was to meet individuals who had evaded it through the most beautiful devotion. Once I met a father and his grown son, the father on the verge of feebleness, but through the rigors of selection in Auschwitz, through the tasks in the slave camps, through the death marches, his son had supported him with a resolution that would not let the old man die, and the father had survived with the son. Among the wom en, also, I met a few mothers whose daughters had managed this miracle of strength. These were the fortunate, and even they were tinged with Glickson's guilt for some other member of their family, brother, child, or husband that had been lost.

* * *

Now I began to find the story of the children who were saved. It was a complex and ramified story of individual efforts and of small underground group efforts; partly it was in the records of good French people who took the children directly from desperate parents, partly it was the record of Jewish resistance units that managed to unify themselves toward the end of the war, and partly it was the record of Christian groups.

Many children had been placed in remote villages and on farms through agents of the underground Jewish organizations, and these organizations managed somehow to keep track of the children throughout the war, and to send money for their upkeep.

In the Paris offices of the Jewish scouts, I saw a card index



which one of the women had until then kept hidden in her home. Each child's file-card was kept up to date as neatly as in a New York social service school; on each card was recorded every detail from the condition of the child's shoes to his aptitude in various studies. Contact with the children had been maintained through the women who each month carried the upkeep money to the peasants. More than one of these women had been caught by the Gestapo, and some had been put to death. Most had been Jewish women working with false papers; but Christian women too had volunteered for this task.

I went with such a Christian on her rounds, for nearly all of the children were still in their foster-homes. The agent was an ordinary looking little housewife, as was necessary for this sort of work during the occupation; her husband was a druggist in Vincennes. Mme. Clément had volunteered for this task because she was herself a mother, she told me. She worked through a Catholic organization, and she had placed her charges, in each village, by making her original contact with the curé, who would indicate reliable families to her.

But in this religious circumstance, too, there bloomed a painful and ugly postwar problem, never to be completely resolved; I was to see samples of it from Paris to Lodz.

I first encountered this problem in the little office of Father Devaux on the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, in familiar Montparnasse; Mme. Clément was one of his workers.

As I lifted the knocker on the door in the high wall along the Paris street, I thought of the hundreds of Jewish mothers who had come here in their last hour of fear, after how many days and weeks of agonized debate at home; they had come leading their children by the hand, for the priest, they had heard, would take Jewish children. And they had turned their children over at this door, and gone back alone to the Rue Vieille du Temple to wait to be gathered up for Drancy and Auschwitz.

The priest was broad-faced, thick, with a hoarse voice and a roundabout way of discussing his work. His particular mission had indeed been always concerned with bringing faith to the Jews. And he had indeed during the war received a few hundred Jewish children and managed to place them outside of Paris. He had done this because it was God's work. Naturally, he told me, Christianity was ready to receive these souls, though it was not a

condition for their physical salvation that they become converted. And since the liberation of Paris, he assured me, a few parents and relatives who had survived had already come to him and been reunited with their children; moreover those children who had no surviving family but who wished to return to their own people would not be hindered.

A few days later I made a trip with Mme Clément to a village in the center of France, in a region where she had placed a score of children. As we walked into the village and approached the central café, I saw two boys in their little black schoolsmocks coming cheerfully home from their classes, to be welcomed with real affection by their foster parents, a middle-aged childless couple who kept the café. With gusto, the café-owner related how the Nazi major had been stationed in this very house, upstairs, and had seen these children every single day, and had never suspected they were Jewish, and how no one in the entire village had ever breathed a word that might have endangered the boys.

These boys were adjusted and happy and loved; their foster parents wanted by all means to keep them—and if the parents of these children were dead, should the Jewish people reclaim them, and take them to live in an orphanage, or leave them, as they were?

Five minutes away, in a muddy little farmyard, there was a different picture. There was a girl of twelve, with a toddler of a little brother. They were barefoot and unkempt like most farm children, but beyond their physical look of neglect was plain misery. They didn't like their foster home or their foster parents. The moment she could take me aside, the little girl whispered to me in Yiddish, "Take us away, please!"

The foster parents were not eager to have them go because the monthly payment for their upkeep was quite useful, and the girl was already helpful on the farm.

In this very town the conflict was already formed, for an American rabbi chaplain had come into the area with the troops, and he had stumbled on the Jewish children, and begun to remove them from the farms and villages, placing them in an improvised orphanage which he set up in an abandoned chateau. Fifty or sixty children were already gathered there.

Rabbi Hazelkorn's view was passionately inflexible, and understandable. The Jewish people, after massacre and bleeding, had



need of every single survivor, every child was therefore a thousand times precious; the remnants had to be gathered and returned to the people.

In my own view, there was another argument. Suppose even that a child were happy and well adjusted, Christianized, suppose even that he had been brought so young to his foster parents as to recall no others, and that his foster parents had not informed the child that he was a Jew. Even so it seemed to me that there remained great danger in building a life on a false assumption; at any time in life this crater remained and could be opened; at any time in strife or anger someone might reveal the child's background to him and shatter his identity, causing infinitely greater harm than if a readjustment were to be made now, in childhood.

In France and later in Poland I heard grievous instances of strife over these children. In Poland, after the war, there were representatives of the Jewish community who occupied themselves with seeking out hidden Jewish children, and on many occasions they had to buy them back from their foster parents, for large sums—million-zloty children, these were called. The children were placed in orphanages in Lodz and Warsaw, many of them first learning, there, that such people as Jews existed, and that they belonged to this people.

But sometimes the Polish foster parents would come and coax the children away again, or even steal them away, and sometimes also the children would run away out of loneliness and strangeness. There were legal battles over these children, and betrayals and bribes, and cunning intrigues, and this too was a residue of conflict and hatred inherited by the few who survived.

Of those who had been rescued through religious institutions or by devoutly Christian families, it was natural that they should have been taught that Jesus had saved them, and in the children taken in their hours of mortal terror this lesson sank deeply home. Many became extremely devout Christians.

And it was these whom Rabbi Hazelkorn most passionately sought to restore to their own people and their own faith. He described how when he first brought them to his orphanage they would want to cross themselves and say their prayers, and how they had stubbornly hidden their crucifixes and their little medals of the saints. Greatest of all was his resentment of Father Devaux,

for the rabbi contended that there were many children still hidden in the villages, and that the priest had refused to surrender the list of these children to him.

I was present in Paris a few days later when the rabbi confronted the priest, demanding, in the name of the Jewish community, the full list of the rescued Jewish children. It was a humiliating scene for both, and for humanity. For these men of God were at first polite with each other, the rabbi thanking the priest for his great humanitarian work in rescuing the children, and the priest insisting that he had done it all as part of his normal moral duty, without ulterior thought.

But as the rabbi became insistent in his demand for the entire list, the priest began to hedge, saying he would first have to get in touch with any survivors in the childrens' families, to secure their consent. Soon their colloquy became a professional struggle over the souls of the surviving children; and beneath the surface of their words, it seemed to me that there was a primitive hatred streaming from the most remote sources, going all the way back to all the legends of Christ-killing, and all the tales of Jew-burning.

And so there was this ugliness too. All this, born of a good deed, for no matter how great a part the possibility of effecting conversions played in his motives, it could not be denied that the priest had saved a multitude of children and that many were even now, if reluctantly, being restored to their people. His only price had been the chance to effect a permanent conversion while he had them; in some, this had taken place.

It was, to me, an ugly commerce. And this too would be leaving its scar on every soul, squabbled over for one god or another.

The pathetic fidelity of the children was described to me in yet another way. For while many of the children accepted the Christian faith through the miracle of their own rescue, as it was said to them, by Jesus, there were those who resisted conversion, clinging in desperation to the last behests of their parents, clinging to the kosher laws, to the Sabbath law, as though their last tie with their loved ones would be maintained as long as they were faithful to the strictest ritual observance, as though their one means of exerting a force on destiny, to bring back mother or father, was through this ritual.

Such tales were told me in Toulouse, where the most daring



activity of all had been conducted, in connection with the surviving children. There an underground group had engaged in gathering Jewish children and taking them over the Pyrenees into Spain, and in Spain, I learned much later, there was a comrade from my own kibbutz, Yagur, who managed to get these children out by ship, in the midst of war, to Palestine.

The center in Toulouse was maintained by a Belgian woman called Tante Giselle, who was aided by a number of young Jewish scouts, the leader amongst them being her own daughter, a wildly brave young girl who smuggled arms for the maquis when she wasn't busy smuggling children across the mountain border.

Tante Giselle related to me how the children were rounded up by her daughter and other workers who sought them out in nunneries and on farms, and in the villages where they had been placed. One by one the children would be brought to Toulouse and hidden out amongst scattered family "depots". When enough had been gathered for a group of passage, and all the necessary equipment had been procured, rucksacks and heavy shoes and warm clothing, each item rare in itself, the group of children would be sent off in the guise of a scouting party on an excursion to Perpignan or some other town near the Spanish border. And from there the children, down to tots of four, would be marched over the Pyrenees by the same guides and contra-bandists who had once led International Brigade recruits into Spain.

But when the children were first brought to Tante Giselle's in Toulouse and during their weeks of waiting, many problems arose, and most touching were the problems of the children who would not eat anything but kosher food. This was the last injunction they carried from their parents, and they clung to it as desperately as to a last photograph.

Sometimes only ham could be obtained as food for the long mountain hike, and there had been cases of children who had refused to eat this unkosher meat even though they were broken with fatigue, halfway across the mountain. Once during a border alarm a group had been forced to remain hidden for several days in a mountain hut, and a little boy of six had lived during those days on nothing but crackers, as he believed no other food was kosher.

This promitive need for the magic talisman I found again and

again, during the years after the war, in the camps and orphanages; a friend who conducted an orphanage near Paris was constrained to go twice a week to the Jewish quarter of the city to buy kosher meat because two of his twenty charges would not relinquish the last injunction of their parents, and because of the two, the entire household ate kosher.

But at the outset of my assignment, in Paris, I saw this too: that the contest for their souls between rabbi and priest might rob some of the children of whatever beauty they found for themselves in faith, in an idea of God.

And this conflict added, again, to the hatred of Jews. For while many French families who had protected Jewish children now gave them up with grace and understanding, others felt that the children were being forcibly separated from their willingly adopted Christian faith in being returned to their own people.

In Paris I had met a young actress who accompanied me once to Rabbi Hazelkorn's orphanage. When she encountered Mme. Clément, who had risked her life to help these children, the actress became quite emotional. "If I had known that there was such a task I would have offered myself for it!" she declared. "To save the Jewish children!"

Yet a week later this very girl indignantly complained that she was in danger of losing her apartment. "It belonged to an old Jew, over sixty-five, and imagine! he's come back alive! He was stuck away somewhere in the south of France. Just think, he's sixty-five years old, and this was supposed to have been his place of business—he claims he had a ladies' tailor-shop here, but the concierge tells me it wasn't a shop at all, but a rendez-vous for his mistresses! An old man like that! And now he claims he has no other place to live.... Of course I'm going to fight to keep my apartment!"

As a reporter, I visited, too, an organization with a long patriotic name, The Defenders of Proprietors in Good Faith. The leader's office was in a dress-making establishment that had once belonged to a Jew. The members were all people who had purchased businesses, shops, apartment buildings "in good faith" through the Nazis. They were going to defend themselves against the restitution of property to survivors.

The leader handed me their manifesto. It was filled with



remarks such as one about "former owners, notorious for their sweatshop practices that reflected ill upon the reputation of purely French commerce"...

And some days later I had to report street demonstrations by returned French veterans in front of Jewish clothing stores...

These were the sores of a deep infection, and history, since then, has shown that even after surgery the disease remains.

I hoped to relieve myself from this festering material in the violent areas of battle, feeling that whatever little I could contribute toward counteracting the myths upon which anti-Semitism is founded would be in the positive stories of Jews fighting in the war.

I left for the front.

* * *

The big problem in covering the war, I learned soon enough, was the simple matter of transportation. Every reporter's dream was to have a jeep to himself for free roaming, instead of having to share with two other correspondents with different objectives.

My own luck in this was good from the beginning. The chief of the Twelfth Army Group press camp turned out to be a former Chicago city editor who knew me. I told him I was covering the "Jewish angle" of the war and made a bold request—since it happened to be the time of the Jewish high holidays, I wanted to range the front covering holiday observances. Sometimes the Jewish angle is useful. When one appeals in the name of a religion, any religion, who can dare refuse?

I was assigned a jeep with driver all to myself for two weeks.

The driver turned out to be an Irishman named, of course, Mac; he was a prewar enlisted man who considered himself a family blacksheep because he couldn't do any better than the army. Mac had a perfect sense of direction; in complete blackout he could retrace his way after winding through a dozen meandering turns in half-destroyed villages. The secret, he told me, was to fix landmarks at every turn, but I was never able to do this.

Mac was glad to escape from the press-camp routine. He felt better, up where the boys were. We went barging around, sleeping in forward command posts in cellars and dugouts, returning to First Army press camp every few days to file my stories. My method of emphasizing Jewish participation was simple; it was similar to the method of hometown reporters, always on the lookout for one of their boys. While I kept an eye open for Jews who had performed outstandingly, I wrote day-to-day atmosphere stories, trying, as frequently as possible, to find a David Shapiro or a Joe Mandelbaum whose name fitted quite naturally with the Fusellis and the Van Dorens who were also up there. As a public relations idea this was perhaps a drop in the ocean; and yet it seemed the only basically valid story to tell.

I spent the morning of Rosh Hashonah, for instance, clambering through the ruins of Stolberg, a town just inside the Siegfried line. It was still half-occupied by German troops, and was being taken house by house. A black-uniformed SS lay beside an overturned motorcycle, another was cramped on the sidewalk under a smashed plateglass window. Leaving the jeep, we followed freshly laid telephone wire into a boarded-up notions shop where we found a company commander in a cluttered back room, having dinner. A hausfrau was cooking the GI rations. The captain greeted me with the derisive, "What the hell you doing up here," which every correspondent received from the men at the front, who believed that their story was not really being told.

The captain was overexcited, voluble, going on his nerves alone. His unit hadn't been relieved in six days of intense battle. His men were strung out through the block, he said, under constant sniper and mortar fire.

A runner was going up to the third platoon with the mail and an observation glass. I went along. We wound through an ironworks, scrambled over a fence into a backyard filled with rabbit hutches, entered a cellar which was crowded with women and children. We twisted through a hole that had been knocked between cellar walls and finally emerged into another backyard which, the GI said, was under observation. We scooted across the open area, and sure enough heard a mortar-burst punctuating our passage. Then we wound through another section of basements that had been linked by holes chopped in walls, and finally came up into a house where troops of the third platoon were stationed.



The men were sitting in an upstairs bedroom; by the window a lad occasionally let go a burst of fire. That very morning, he said, they had caught a Jerry self-propel coming out of cover in a yard down there, they'd nailed it, using the bazooka there. It lay atop a dresser amidst a mess of soldier's junk and household things; there was a bowl filled with what appeared to be visiting cards. I picked up a handful. They were black-bordered announcements from the families of soldiers killed in action. Hundreds of cards, and all of these, merely within the acquaintance of a single family.

My guide was calling out mail. I listened, and my luck was good—there was someone named Isidore Silverbrandt.

That was my story, then, the mail-delivery to an outpost, except that I falsified or invented to the extent of making the runner Jewish also, and having him deliver a Jewish New Year's card to Isidore Silverbrandt, saying, "Shana Tova, happy New Year!" under his breath.

We were as brave as the others, I was trying to say, but even in the midst of war man carried with him, and found comfort in, the ties to his own folk.

In the following week came the solemn Day of Atonement. I was cruising along the road that paralleled the German border, south of Aachen. Troops had just taken up positions in the forest, there.

I worked my way down from First Division command to regimental command to brigade to company command in a farmhouse under shellfire. My editor, I said, had given me a special assignment to spend a night with a GI in a foxhole. The company officers shook their heads in full sympathy over the crazy ideas of an editor safe across the Atlantic. Well, if I had to do it I had to do it, they said, and directed me down the road. I'd come to a smashed-up inn, that was where they had had quite a party yesterday, turn right, and along the edge of the road I'd find the platoon commander. He'd fix me up a choice foxhole.

When I got that far I asked the platoon commander if he happened to have a Jewish boy in his outfit. There was a young man, it turned out, even from Chicago; his name was Charles

Solomon—he was married, had a kid, worked in a sausage factory at home.

I found Solomon by his foxhole a few yards from the road. He was a mild, slightly built fellow. The hole was a yard deep and wide enough for two men. Solomon's partner was a steelmill worker from Gary, named George Boic. Just now, Boic was standing guard.

For the groundcloth in the hole they had put down a Nazi party flag, taken off the wall of the tavern back there at the crossroads, Over this were Boic's blankets. They slept on them, and used Solomon's blankets for covers.

I stayed with Solomon until his partner came off guard. We talked about his hopes after the war—always with the "if I get out"—about his chances to raise up his son as he would like to do, giving him a good education. Then we discussed his war job; Solomon and his partner operated a mortar. Solomon liked this better than being a rifleman, he said, for though he was just as close to the enemy as a rifleman as far as danger was concerned, there remained a hair's breadth of distinction as far as killing was concerned. Lobbing in mortar shells was not as direct as pointing bullets. He didn't want to have it on his mind that he had pointed a gun at a man and killed him.

After the partner got back, Solomon had a spell of patrol; I went along. We walked the length of the road, the way I had come. It was a contact patrol to F company. The lieutenant said not to patrol in the woods, just to stay along the ditch, for a man had been killed in the woods that afternoon. In the forest, it was easy for snipers to filter through and pick off a stray man.

The forest would have to be cleaned out—that was an ugly job for tomorrow.

We walked down the road on our midnight patrol on the Day of Atonement. Inwardly, I dramatized myself, for this was my thirty-ninth birthday.

The Jerries had the area well zeroed in, and the shells sailed right overhead, making a sound like trains on an overpass. They crashed, just beyond in the woods. We decided that the Jerries were gunning for the farmhouse CP, and we felt safe with that strange equanimity one senses when the shells are aimed somewhere else, no matter if it is only a few hundred yards away. That was one thing about a retreating army—they always knew the



exact positions of everything, once they had withdrawn, so they could fire accurately. We counted five shells. Now there was a column of flame back there where the shells were bursting. We decided it was a haystack, it was so bright.

We reached the crossroads, and the smashed-up tavern where colored streamers from a recent festival still hung in the wreckage, and a girl's freshly ironed dress dangled from a fixture in the middle of the room. A voice said "Halt!" Charley Solomon said "Reno" and the voice responded, "Nevada." The contact was made.

It was no night for standing around gabbing. We went back up the road, back to our hole.

All night long the shells exploded and trees crashed.

In the morning a jeep appeared with hot food. The boys hugged the driver: this was the first hot food they'd had for several days. The driver, named Goldby, had brought a mimeographed news sheet, and the men stood around discussing the Army-Navy football game. I took some of their names; Rosenthal, McGinnis....

They wondered how long they'd have to sit in that forest. They felt trapped there. It was the Huertgen Forest.

* * *

One day we nearly drove past an outpost marker, a rationbox planted in the middle of a road. A GI yelled us down. A file of men were just forming outside a farmhouse. This was a patrol to a German airstrip of momentary importance. The patrol-leader said the strip was thought to have been evacuated. The patrol was to find out. I fell in with it.

The leader had patches of red hair glinting under his helmet, red stubble on his cheeks. He was a lieutenant named Philip Mosias, from Newark; he had worked at Bamberger's. But that was another world. Now he was concerned to keep his men strung out so that snipers or mines couldn't get them in a bunch. He had a detail map and an airphoto of the landing field. His patrol consisted of about thirty men. Mosias kept his walkie-talkie

man beside him; as though by prearrangement for my sake this man's name was Christl.

The approach to the field was through several hundred yards of lightly wooded farmland. In a clump of high bushes we came upon the remains of a cracked-up fighter plane, the swastika big on its tail. Then we came upon another Luftwaffe plane, partly banged up, nesting under a leafy camouflage. We were getting close.

Now came a barbed-wire fence. Within, we could see a number of well-camouflaged barracks set amongst the trees. Mosias grunted. The barracks hadn't shown at all on the aerial photograph. In the center of the grounds was a wooden tower; the whole group of buildings was oddly like a kibbutz.

The landing field was on the other side of this compound. One by one we crawled through the fence, advancing in darting fashion to the walls of the nearest buildings. Mosias sent the men in twos and threes to check the barracks. Everything was too quiet.

We entered a barrack. It was well cleaned out. There were little rooms with double-tiered bunks where the fliers and ground personnel had lodged; they'd left only scattered bits of letters and a few books, including a Nazi catechism.

The patrol was progressing warily toward the central tower. I slipped alongside a wall, and stood for a moment with a young GI from Arkansas who was covering the tower. Just then, on the far side of the compound, we saw a greenish figure darting away. The Arkansas boy fired. The man out there slowed, then dropped. "First one I ever got," said the GI. He told me he was in a recent batch of replacements; he was twenty; he had married a month before being shipped overseas.

Mosias joined us for a second. He was having Christl report back saying the place was abandoned. But he was worried. Maybe the Jerries were sucking us in. Everything was too easy.

Then he moved forward to the tower, with Christl and the Arkansas boy, and just as they reached the tower everything opened up. Artillery had been zeroed in on the barracks. Here a roof, there a wall caved in. Machinegun and rifle fire came from a nearby woods. There seemed to be a tank there, too.

In one of the neat juxtapositions that sometimes happen in



war, the Arkansas boy, so proud of killing his first Jerry, got a bullet in his head.

The tower caught fire; a section collapsed, pinning a man beneath heavy timber. Several of his comrades labored fiercely to get him out. Mosias was yelling for everybody to assemble at the fence. The men were returning fire toward the woods, and retreating in darting movements, some of them simply running toward the fence.

They wriggled through, crouching in the high bushes on the other side. "Tell them we're coming back," Mosias said to Christl. Then he called for the squad leaders to check their men. Five were missing. There was the Arkansas boy whom Mosias knew for sure to be dead. Someone said, "That baldhead, what's his name—I seen him get knocked out with concussion." Someone else said, "No, I seen him come out." Another GI had been hit in the leg, someone said.

"Where was that?" Mosias asked. They told him. "Okay, start back. Keep your distance," Mosias ordered. Then he plunged through the wire fence, back toward the spot where the man with the wounded leg was said to have fallen.

The rest of us stumbled through the bushes, shells following us. We hurried—half-stooped, breathing heavily. There was a noise in the brush and two Germans appeared, grinning idiotically, with their hands up. The boys had a hard time keeping their fingers off their triggers. But the prisoners were taken.

We came about halfway, and the men flopped, feeling safer. Presently Mosias appeared; he was carrying the wounded man piggyback.

I don't know to this day whether many papers printed these stories of mine; the hometown paper of the boy who was named could always be counted on. Later, some papers in smaller cities like New Haven and Wilmington seemed to be using my stories fairly regularly. Not all that I wrote, of course, had the purpose of presenting the Jewish soldier. But low as the returns might be, it seemed to me worth while to send out this material.

We were back on the same spot the next day because of a

Negro story. All through the war there had been disputes about Negro troops. There was widespread talk among the white soldiers that Negroes wouldn't fight, that they had been no good in Italy. At the same time there was resentment over the rear-area assignments of the Negroes, and the way the French and Belgian women accepted them.

Now a new plan was going into effect. A number of Negro volunteers had been trained for front-line fighting, and instead of being formed into separate units they were being attached in platoons to forward companies. One of these platoons, I learned, was just being attached to the company at the airfield.

I went out to see how the plan was working. The company had moved forward and occupied the field; the commandpost was now in the operations barrack. Two more wounded men from our patrol had crawled to safety during the night. That left a cost of two.

Now the troops were dug in on the perimeter of the field, sitting under incessant fire. The Negroes were out there, too, the fellows said. "You go out as far as the far end of the field, you'll see a gully on your right. Follow the gully and you'll come to a little dugout. They're all around there."

The company commander sent a runner with me to make sure I found the gully. The shelling never stopped. This was saturation. After we had gone part way the runner pointed, saying I couldn't miss the gully, and turned back. I nearly blundered past the gully, which was scarcely more than a ditch. In the mouth of a shallow dugout an aidman was bending over a wounded GI—a piece of shrapnel had fallen into his foxhole and cut his shoulder. They motioned me along the ditch, saying I'd find the main dugout a ways down.

The next few moments of going alone in that gully were amongst the most terrible in all my experience. I well understood why the runner didn't want to take any further risk for a lousy reporter. Every shell seemed to be coming on top of me. And now I realized why they were called screaming meanies.

I began to run, my feet tangling in a refuse of clotted leaves. I began to babble. The gully took a right turn, forked. They hadn't mentioned that, and I feared I had passed the dugout and was going toward the Germans. I back-tracked to the fork, saw



nothing, tried the other way. And just at that moment I saw a Negro sitting in a foxhole.

Yah, he said. He had been a driver on the Redball, and he had volunteered for this. He knew why.

Yah, they were received okay by the white boys so far.

Yah, it was rough. But he had known it was going to be rough. He was feeling okay.

I asked him a little about his background. He had been born south, come up north. As we faced each other there, nothing needed to be said. Everything was clear.

A shell fell close by and we both embraced the earth.

"You better get out of this," he said.

He told me I had passed the command dugout—it was just by the fork in the gully. I found it on my way back, and crawled inside. Two whites and three Negroes were sitting there. All were equally dismal and silent. Each man, white or black, was shrunken in his own terror. They were taking as heavy a pasting as men can take.

I didn't want to leave. This was one time when leaving was harder than sitting in a hole under cover. It was true that in the hole one felt that each next shell was coming directly down on us. One felt that a loudly uttered word would upset the equilibrium and bring down the shell. But outside, shrapnel was thick.

Finally I stumbled through the ditch and made my way back to the barracks. I saw other Negroes now, in their foxholes, as I passed.

I think only the Negro press used the story.

* * *

As we entered Germany I turned to the second part of my assignment, the survivors. We had just crossed the dragon's teeth of the Siegfried line, and in the very first town within the

border I found the first Military Government unit. They had hired a German woman as interpreter. She was, they believed, Jewish. I was eager to talk to the first Jew found in Germany.

She was the daughter of one of the wealthy old Aachen textile-mill families, but married to an Aryan. The woman was extremely good-looking, young, smart, cultured, and even now she managed a note of snobbishness. I realized that I had come with a prepared warmth, expecting an excited outpouring from a person infinitely relieved, after years of hiding, to be able to speak openly at last to one of her own people. But the woman was carefully aloof, and made me feel rather that I was an invader, but that she would politely respond to my questions. It was an attitude with which I was to become quite familiar, among the Germans.

During the heavy bombardment of Aachen, the interpreter and her Aryan husband had taken refuge in this little border village. Yes, a few years ago the Nazis had ordered her husband to divorce her, but he had refused, and his brother, a high Nazi, had managed to protect them. Naturally the children had endured insults, and sometimes even stoning from their comrades, and in the end she had had to withdraw them from school. Her parents had gone to South America.

The woman's recital was quite frigid. She was of course a completely assimilated Jewess, she had been raised as a Protestant; and it was not the persecution of Jews so much as the sheer illogic of this persecution in its furthest washes against her own assimilated self that shocked her.

The head of the Military Government team was an ex-commissioner of motor vehicles from Wisconsin, earnest, affable and average; he was proud of being assigned to the pilot operation in the Aachen area. He proved, it seemed to me later, to be no match for the powerful friends of the clever young woman. For she was, oddly enough, not only to be the first but the last German I interviewed, since I stopped in Aachen a few weeks after the close of the war, to see how the major's pilot operation was doing.

By that time my friend Saul Padover had made a study of the city's administration and provoked the first scandal about the aims and effectiveness of our military government, for his



report had shown that it was the good old clique centered around the mill owners who ran the city anew; the control of the police and of a large part of the secondary offices, where the operational power centered, were in the hands of the Nazi element. The lines of power ran right through the pretty hands of the governing major's secretary.

When I came to interview the major, reminding him of our early encounter as we first entered Germany, he was all cordiality. He was full of respect for the "cultured element" of the town and told me, rather in awe, of the fine homes they had and of the exclusiveness of the best families. I asked him a few questions about the price of bread on the open and on the black market and he averred that for all practical matters he referred to his secretary.

The beauteous secretary was summoned, and as she got the drift of the questions she became icily ignorant of anything that was taking place in Aachen, scarcely bothering to conceal her hostility.

Yes, her kind had even survived the Nazis. And this pilot operation had indeed set the pattern for all Germany.

But on that first trip I was to find survivors of various kinds, as I hastily toured Brussels and Antwerp and Luxembourg on my way back to surrender my jeep. In each city there was a pattern already familiar to me from Paris. There were the courageous few who had gone into resistance, preferring to die fighting rather than to be exported for mass slaughter. In Brussels, I talked to a young professor of philosophy who had headed the Jewish underground. He told me how their false-paper service had operated through the town hall itself, providing them with genuine documents of deceased citizens. He told me of his three-year-old child who had been hidden in the country and who had proudly piped, to every adult who stroked his head and asked him for his name, "I'm a hidden Jewish child!" And there were stories too of counterespionage carried on against a certain half-Jew who had roamed the streets in a Gestapo car as an expert at identifying Jews by their looks; the Germans had paid him a few hundred dollars a head. The underground had managed to photograph this expert, and they were seeking him now.

In Antwerp, where the wealthy Jewish diamond merchants had lived, I found a young man and his sister, almost the sole survivors of the fabulous Jewish community. They had been hidden in the home of a Belgian woman who painted flowers. I saw their hiding place, a space about a yard high between the ceiling and the second floor. The entrance was a hole, covered by one of the woman's floral pieces. There the boy and girl had lain through the war, venturing down by ladder occasionally at night to stretch their cramped limbs. They told me of the end of the diamond merchants—how many of them had refused to leave Antwerp and save themselves even in the last days before the German invasion, and how merchants had buried their stocks of diamonds in their back yards, and how the Gestapo had squeezed the diamonds out of them by tortures, estimating that when the tortures went on until death it was true that the Jew had no more hidden diamonds. In an ex-Gestapo center, I saw the torture boxes and the electric shock baths.

In Holland I talked to a half-Jew, a lawyer, who had hidden allied fliers as well as fleeing Jews in his house, helping them to slip across the border into Belgium on their way out of Europe. He showed me the secret closet under the stair-landing, where they had lain.

In Luxembourg I photographed the few stones that lay on the vacant lot where the synagogue had stood, and on a street facing the cemetery I hunted up a man who cowered behind his locked door: he was a Jewish doctor who had originally fled from Germany to Luxembourg, and during the deportations it was he who had been chosen by the Germans to do the bookkeeping of the death of his brethren. "How could I refuse? What good would it have done?" He brought out the deportation lists, watching anxiously to see whether I believed him when he said he had stolen this copy at great risk. I took the lists with me.

This was the beginning of a new task—to find the names, the names of the dead, the deported, the survivors. As each town, as each city was entered, I was to seek these lists, for the Jews in the outside world had been waiting through years of silence and now at last they might begin to know whether there was any hope that their relatives might be alive.

It was obviously a task beyond me, a task for a social agency;



but I could make the first contacts, establish the first channels of aid for the survivors. So I had found my work.

But as my Jewish holiday jeep was overdue, I had to go back to Paris for a new connection.

In Paris, I found a letter from Tereska. Her husband, Georges Torres, had been reported missing and was presumed dead. He had gone out on a three-man patrol near Strasbourg. One man had returned, telling how Georges and his comrade had fallen. But Tereska would not believe that her husband was dead.

I made my way down to his unit. The boy's body had been found, by then. Still, she would not believe. And in her seventh month of pregnancy, she managed to secure papers that would pass her to the front. Then she knew.

* * *

I had to become attached to a press camp. The First and Third Army camps were full. Moreover, in covering the Jewish story it would be better not to be confined to any one army territory. From Bill Davidson of Yank I heard of the wonders of the Ninth Air Force press camp in Luxembourg, a few miles from the front. It was not crowded, as few correspondents were permanently assigned to cover the air force. On the other hand, from the Ninth, a man could roam the territories of any of the armies, while doing occasional air stories.

The Ninth Air Force press camp was presided over by Ben Wright, an astute advertising man from Michigan who considered that the best way to get the American public to understand that the Ninth Air Force was winning the war was to run a fine hotel for correspondents. The press camp was therefore imbedded in a tourist grand hotel whose wartime standard of services compared favorably with anything on the continent in days of peace.

There was plenty of heat, unlimited hot water, an excellent civilian cuisine, there were even a few obliging maids—a rarity in the stuffy land of Luxembourg—and Red Cross girls were frequent overnight visitors.

Breakfast was served until ten-thirty in the morning; after that the lords of the press were conveyed to a painless briefing, out of which it was possible to concoct the routine operational stories that, on most days, sufficed. After the briefing it was of course too late to go out before lunch. Lunch was a sumptuous affair attentively and leisurely served in an elegant diningroom. When one had recovered from lunch it was naturally too late to go to the front in time to get back for dinner, and anyway some boys from the Third Army press camp who had been to the front would be sure to drop in for dinner on their way back to their dismal abode in a requisitioned schoolhouse, and they'd oblige with a little front-line material in exchange for air-force hospitality.

It must be emphasized that the hotel journalists formed only part of the press, there were of course the punishment-seekers who breakfasted at eight and went chasing out to the front without waiting for the briefing.

The jeepmate question was solved when I teamed with Morley Cassidy of Philadelphia. We were not of course pointedly aware of ourselves as Jew and Irishman though around us there was the peculiar folk humor that welcomes a partnership between an Irishman and a Jew. Afterwards, like someone who all unknowingly goes through a psychological test, I saw that the Jewish self-consciousness, the measuring against a non-Jewish buddy, was with me the whole time. For during considerable periods I was a "normal" correspondent with my Jewish assignment quite secondary, just as during periods of intense activity at the front the Jewish soldier could forget himself and become entirely one of a unit. With Cassidy I went through such a period in the action of the Bulge, perhaps worth including not only for the sake of showing myself in equilibrium for once in a participating phase, but for the material itself as lived-through experience.

Cassidy was one of those rare beings, an absolutely straight



newspaperman, capable and conscientious to the extreme. He would write only what he knew to be so, and he would go to any risk to get his material, and would not risk his nose an inch beyond utility. As the Ninth Air Force camp was happily short of jeep drivers, we were free to roam without even the presence of a man bound by army restrictions. Cassidy always insisted on stopping to ask our whereabouts when no army markers appeared; my tendency was to trust to instinct. He claims he several times prevented me from driving into the German lines, but there is really no proof that I would have gone that far.

When we went out, he would be in search of hometown features about Philadelphians, and I about Jews; occasionally he'd come upon a Philadelphian who was a Jew, or I upon a Jew who was a Philadelphian, and we would share.

There had been a stalemate for several weeks after Aachen. One day we learned that the air force had been alerted for a big offensive to take place in the vicinity of the Rohr dam. We had a fairly authoritative notion of the time and place of the jumpoff. With more than a day to spare, we started out along the Luxembourg-German border, cruising in a disreputable jeep called the Spirit of Alpena, after Major Wright's home town.

Cassidy had figured out a good luncheon stop for us at the headquarters of the Twenty-Eighth Division, for this unit, being organized around the Pennsylvania home guard, contained a high number of Cassidy's hometowners. Just now, the division was at rest.

Their headquarters was indeed on a picturesque hill in the wooded "Luxembourg tyrol". As we drove into the compound, an MP bawled us out for having our uniforms unbuttoned—they were so relaxed as to be occupied with such matters. As we wisecracked back at the huge fellow we gulped, realizing it was the provost marshall himself, and he gulped in turn when he saw that we were correspondents. The provost marshall proved to to be both a Philadelphian and a Jew, so we started to work on him.

While we were gabbing in his office, a couple of lads came in with a queer tale. They were in a rest camp down the hill, virtually on the German border. The Germans too had troops

at rest in this sector, and there was an unspoken truce. "But whatayaknow this morning those sonsabitches lobbed a couple in. They landed right past the window of that recreation shack we fixed up. I don't know if it was their idea of a joke or what?"

"Anybody hurt?"

"Naw."

The incident was discussed in a desultory way, and dismissed.

At mess we heard a similar story, this time from a lieutenant. The officers at the table took the story a little more seriously. But finally they dismissed it as a feint or itchy-finger stuff. After all, there was nothing facing them capable of making trouble. This whole sector was a rest area on both sides, and the terrain in winter was impassable.

As we left, Cassidy and I exchanged a few remarks about military ways we could never comprehend. For instance, we had always believed that rest sectors were far behind the lines, and here they were smack up against the enemy. Probably the terrain. But here was our jeep driving right through the terrain.

Toward evening we decided to find an overnight stop rather than drive in blackout to our destination. In a hamlet where the road forked we asked a military policeman whether there was a division headquarters anywhere nearby. "Sure, there's two," he said. "The Second Div is on the left a couple of miles, and there's a new outfit just come in, the Hundred Sixth, you take the fork to the right."

"Which is further?"

"About the same difference."

Rather at random, we decided on the Second Division. Had we taken the right fork we probably would have been captured the next morning.

We found the division headquarters in a crummy, two-story schoolhouse at a dirt crossroads. The PRO was away on leave, but a staff aide wanted us to do a story about an "old iron man" commanding their tank-destroyer unit; we just had time before supper to drive down a sidelane where we interviewed the old campaigner nested in the snow.

After supper a supply officer found us a couple of beds in



the farmhouse where he was bunked, and gabbed with us about getting away to Paris for a few days since the division was in reserve position.

We were awakened before dawn by the same officer, Matt Konopp, and told to come on the run. We reached the schoolhouse. A few men were stumbling in the half-dark. Distantly we heard motors beginning to turn.

The lieutenant of the night before was sitting at the switchboard. He said the Germans had broken through and practically wiped out that new outfit on our right, and we could expect the Jerries here at any minute. That was about all anybody knew. Breakfast wasn't going to be much good, he apologized, as the cooks were being mustered for defense. Maybe, he suggested, we had better take off while the going was good; the situation was such that he couldn't be responsible.

We both knew enough to understand that when a division headquarters was in danger of being overwhelmed by an attack that had begun only a few hours before, matters were in desperate shape.

Someone handed us French toast and mugs of coffee. We tried to keep out of the way, standing around eating. A sergeant had replaced the lieutenant at the switchboard. A radio was whirling out a jazz program. "If I get captured that's one thing I'm taking right with me, my radio," the sergeant vowed. He answered a call. It was from a forward observer directing artillery fire. "What's that? Where did you say?" the sergeant repeated incredulously. And then, with the stupor of bravado confronted by heroism, the sergeant announced out loud, "That guy says to drop it right on him. The Jerries are there."

There was movement all around now, though it was never of the kind that people imagine when thinking of a desperate battle. The old iron man's antitank outfit had been alerted and he was indeed the first one down, halting in front of headquarters in a truck dragging a gun. A few other guns were wheeled down the snow-crusted road, and the men stood beating their arms, waiting to be told where to put their guns.

The general had appeared. He was standing in the doorway, a spare man in his greatcoat, much like a schoolmaster during recreation period instructing groups of youngsters how to clean up the yard. He was an army commander of long experience,

and he had a division with long tradition. General Robertson gave his orders conversationally.

The whole scene was so casual that Cassidy and I had great difficulty convincing ourselves we were in the midst of a most unusual event. The division, in a reserve position for our own intended attack, now found itself exposed because of the hole that had been punched on the right. There were no troops sheathing the headquarters, since the troops had been pointed the other way. We could be directly reached. And here was a general on his doorstep, calling to individuals from his headquarters, his company clerks, his map men, his cooks, giving each a direct order, "Get up on the roof there of that building in front of us, and cover that field." "Take a bazooka into that woods there and cover that piece of dirt road."

We stepped back into the schoolroom, which was the operations room. There was talk of twelve tanks on the road, already past the hamlet where we had turned the night before. The lieutenant pulled his pistol out of the holster; he looked around to the rear of the room and gesticulated, announcing to everyone present, "Escape route will be through the window in the toilet."

Still we couldn't believe that in a few moments we might be engaged in a "last-ditch fight" like in a movie with somebody with a pistol holding off the onrushing enemy while we tried to crawl through a toilet window.

Again they warned us to leave. This time we got pretty scared and we went out and started up the motor of our jeep, to be sure at least that we wouldn't be stalled because of the Alpena's cranky engine.

Day had come by now, a murky day with a sky like dirty snow. Gradually, in reddish streaks, it cleared.

We turned the jeep rearward. One of the officers called us aside and asked if we would undertake a little mission. He had a box for us to put in our jeep; it was a small crate of documents containing the campaign plans for the division as far, he smiled, as Berlin. Then he handed us a couple of thermite bombs and showed us how to use them so as to destroy the documents in case we found ourselves in imminent danger of capture.

We got everything set in the jeep, then returned to the doorstep, next to the general. Shells had begun breaking the



trees in the copse on our right where several antitank guns had taken up position. There were some yells passed along for an aidman. A lieutenant in a jeep appeared from behind a shed; he drove into the woods, and presently the jeep reappeared with the wounded man slumped in the rear seat. At the same time a GI wandered a little dazed across the schoolyard in front of us; his cheek had been cut open by a shell fragment. "Where's the aid station?" he asked. Someone pointed to a shed a hundred steps down the lane, and half started to help the wounded man. "I'm okay, I can make it."

Now a runner came from the aid station. Men were piling up on the floor and there weren't enough blankets. The switchboard man put through a call to a forward station now paradoxically in the rear. "Throw some blankets in a jeep and get them up here."

Captains, colonels, kept arriving, talking for a moment anxiously to the general on the doorstep, going off. The division was turning, facing the enemy now. The sergeant kept calling out messages, a dozen enemy vehicles sighted coming out of the woods on the other side of the hamlet, four tanks in the lead.

Matt Konopp was standing next to the general, muttering. "God, if we only had some planes." And as if in direct reply, planes were heard overhead. Somebody yelled, "There's a dogfight." All we saw were exhaust trails in the bits of open sky breaking the leaden overcast. And flackbursts, like mere released handfuls of smoke. The air activity continued sporadically; sometimes we saw a flash of a plane but were unable to make out whether it was theirs or ours. Still, they had to be our own boys from the Ninth, up there in direct battle with the Germans.

Directly behind the schoolhouse, in a shack, was an airforce liaison talker, giving the planes their targets. We stood beside him for a few moments just as he managed to get a squadron of the Ninth into communication. He was so concentrated that he seemed to be holding onto the planes in the air and talking to them by sheer force of will, rather than by radio. "Kingfish Leader, Kingfish Leader, here's your target. Coming out of that little crossroads town, right under you, a column of four tanks, four trucks, three troop carriers. Over."

"Roger," we heard the response. "We're clobbering that column now."

The air talker too had his thermite bombs ready beside his communications set.

From the doorway of his shack we saw a plane plummeting, trailing a thick tail of smoke. Ours, or theirs?

Konopp shouted, "We got one, we got one," but in that grayish light we felt he couldn't be sure, either.

Now we saw the enemy. There in the field of snow before us, only a few hundred yards away, were two small black objects —enemy tanks. And even as we watched, one turned red, the outlines blurring in flame. We could see the men-specks moving away from the tank. We could see another black object on the snow, a tank some distance behind, still slowly moving toward us.

Now we heard heavier explosions, slightly more distant; the planes were dropping stuff.

Cassidy and I climbed to the roof of the building just in front of us, which proved to be a sort of consistory. There were several light machineguns on the roof, where a low stone border gave good cover. The GI's were trying to reach the little specks that still moved a bit around the burning tank. And on both sides of us, below, our antitank guns were reaching for the second tank, beside the burning one, and for the third, behind. The second tank was apparently stalled, or cautious about advancing further.

Now another shell caught and jarred the burning tank. The men-specks out there faded back over a little rise of snow.

Someone came up from below, saying there were ten tanks reported on another road to our right, the lead tank knocked out.

We weren't aware of stuff falling around us and I don't know to this day whether much fell. The three tanks that came within a few hundred yards of the division headquarters had made the furthest penetration. The third was hit before it got as far as the other two.

For another hour, we went back and forth between the consistory and the schoolhouse; messages were coming in regularly now from the road on the left, along which the men had been bivouacked the night before. The whole position had been



successfully turned around, and units were filtering into place in front of us.

That was all we saw. All in slow motion all morning in the pale winter light, all with the blurred edges, the uncertainties and stumbling that is war. The three tanks that had been knocked out could of course in another ten minutes have overrun us and perhaps finished us. This, we had to remind ourselves, had been a plain view for once of the actual enemy—yet even while the action had been taking place we had not felt personally menaced.

In mid-morning the general told us he believed he could hold his position. We decided that we should leave, for we had our story to get out, and we would no longer be leaving in flight.

But what we had seen was historic. Had General Robertson decided not to risk his headquarters, had he occupied his morning in moving rearward, all of his division along the road on the left would have been in confusion, would most likely have been overrun, and the divisions further to our left, in place for the Rohr offensive, would have been taken from their rear; the way to Liege would have been open; immense stocks of war supplies would have fallen to the Germans—particularly gasoline, on which they had counted for their continued attack.

General Robertson's division never budged from that position. It was the anchor of our line. Their stand forced the Germans into a pocket that became the bulge of the Battle of the Bulge. Had the Second Division given way, that bulge would have burst into an inundation.

Cassidy and I found our way back to corps headquarters. The operations room was buzzing with confusion. The staffs of three divisions seemed to be milling around here, each man trying to adjust his mind away from his own adventure, his personal escape, to the general task.

For the first time we began to appreciate the scope of the disaster. The Twenty-Eighth Division, which we had visited the day before, lunching so pleasantly, was considered wiped out. It had been in the direct center of the German thrust. Obviously

the few teasing shells we had heard about at lunch had been feelers.

The Hundred Sixth, which had never been in combat, was considered wiped out though the staff had escaped and was here. Cassidy and I were eagerly seized upon for news of the Second.

And yet, there was no atmosphere of disaster. Most of the men around us were men who had had narrow personal escapes that morning— but escapes, and they were in a state of exhilaration, like people who have rushed ashore just out of reach of the breakers. Officers kept lunging into the room, grabbing each other—"You here too!" and reciting their tales. Heroic fighting was going on in the crossroads town where we had last night stopped to ask our way; cooks, supply troops, members of a brass band were taking on tanks with grenades.... But how far were the Germans? Should corps headquarter pull back?

Certain placenames had a familiar echo. The very threat of a sweep around the allied troops in Belgium seemed to have been made before. Of course, it was a tracing of the first German campaign; in 1940 the Germans had rolled along these very roads through Luxembourg into Belgium and France. Our side had simply been caught napping twice in the same place.

But our own job now was to get back to the press camp at Spa with our story.

The press camp too was in a daze. As it turned out, we happened to be the only correspondents with an eyewitness experience of the breakthrough, as the First Army correspondents had all been waiting to go out on our own offensive.

Now, everyone was trying to comprehend the big, the terrible story. And the censor was reading out the names of divisions on the blackout list. When he had finished, Cassidy nudged me. The censor hadn't mentioned the Second. We could write our eyewitness story of the division's stand.

In moments like this, a newspaperman feels some usefulness. Every American with a man on the European front was in terrible anxiety through the ensuing days. Our story at least answered the questions in the minds of those who had men in the Second Infantry. They knew their men had not been overwhelmed.



The next day we went out prowling to see if we could check the extent of the German penetration and find out whether our lines were being stabilized. It was a weird day; we felt as though we were wandering through an area where places no longer had names, where traffic was haphazard or reversed, where everything was in inexplicable movement. The civilians had begun to panic and to pile their belongings onto wagons and carts, jamming the roads on which the convoys were moving.

In one town after another we would see our units pulling out; the big guns, the self-propels, the lines of trucks, and the people silently, desperately watching them go, calling out, "You'll be back soon, we know it."

We squirmed through traffic all day long, and gradually sensed the form of the German thrust. Our side wall was holding and therefore the thrust was still creeping forward, feeling its way along the wall, seeking a crack, a hole, a place to turn.

Toward evening we began to move toward Spa. Dark fell long before we could make it, in the turgid traffic, and then came a couple of the scariest hours we had ever experienced.

The blackout was complete down to cat's-eye lights. Blackout driving at any time is nerve racking; one feels like an atom astray in the black universe, subject to collision at any instant with an unknown obstacle, a planet. In blackout driving in convoy one has at least the sense of a known object in front; you can hug close enough to feel its presence. Unconvoyed blackout driving on an open road has moments of lowered tension, staggered with peaks of terror when huge truck-forms whoosh by in the opposite direction.

But on this night we felt like worms crawling around amongst immense feet. Everything was on the road. Huge tank carriers would suddenly loom over us, grazing our jeep. We would crawl, and yet suddenly gasp, pulling up sharp, sensing a denser blackness that was the rear of a GMC truck. Then we would find the road blocked, with GI's actually crouching along the pavement setting up defenses. Shells were dropping directly on the left. There were sky-flashes.

We reversed, felt our way back to a town, found an alternate road; a convoy was going forward on it, and where could they be going? the war was right there.

At times we didn't know whether we were inside our lines or

in no-man's land. Actually we were in Malmedy, where a battle went on for several days thereafter. Somehow we crept through, and reached Spa.

The town was deserted. We pulled up to the press camp and found no vehicles in the parking lot. A guard at the building told us the camp was evacuated, gone to Liege he believed. We entered, nevertheless, and wandered through the deserted building, fancying that we were Germans walking in to take over, just as we Americans had so often entered towns and walked through abandoned German quarters. For some weird reason I picked up stacks of carbon paper—enough to last for several years after the war.

We left the building and went to a little hotel down the street where much of the press had stayed. There were two other correspondents still in the hotel, an Englishman, and a French newsreel cameraman; both were killed later in the war.

The proprietress was keeping up her spirits. She was sure the Germans wouldn't get as far as Spa, she declared. She was sure the press would be back in a few days—it was just an evacuation of prudence.

She had some excellent steaks for us, and we could have any room in the house. We wandered through the rooms, picking up souvenirs left by our comrades. A glamour-girl reporter had left a few uniforms and all of her notes, including some revealing correspondence from her editor. We encountered a couple of CIC men who were checking the place, swearing at the indiscretion of the correspondents who had failed to destroy classified information.

The next morning we drove to Liege. The city was under V-2 bombardment and we were shocked when we saw it, for half of Liege seemed to have been destroyed since we had last been there. We drove around for several hours trying to locate the press camp and finally were told it was in a mill nearby. We decided, instead of hunting for it, to go home to Luxembourg. That was the day the mill was bombarded; two correspondents were killed.

Our project was to drive around the perimeter of the German thrust, thus getting a clear idea of the extent of penetration. We set out, feeling our way along the traffic-laden roads, time and again venturing down a road toward the other side, only to discover that it was already cut off, that the Germans had pierced



further west. We would double back and drive along the side wall of the bulge another ten miles, and try again.

The roads were crammed with heavy trucks, artillery. We began to encounter British units moving in to back up the wall. There seemed to be no panic now. The heavy convoys were pounding into place, and we began to see the war as a driver's war—the Germans couldn't beat us because every American was a driver, because we could load our whole army onto trucks and drive all night and get into position and be waiting for them, because we had the trucks and the gas.

And yet we were being forced deeper and deeper back. Finally Cassidy and I decided to try a route through a little town called La Roche, and then across to a town called Bastogne, and then we would be on the other side and could follow the opposite wall back to Luxembourg.

We reached La Roche at noon. It was in a crease between two steep hills, and the town's one narrow street was wedged tight with an artillery convoy. Everyone was outdoors offering beer, bread and wine to the departing Americans. We pulled into a sidelane; a man and woman asked us into their house for a bite to eat.

They served us sandwiches and coffee, and the woman brought out a jar of preserves for us. Their two children, tots under six, played in the room, and the parents talked of how things had been during the German occupation. Even if it came again, they were sure it would not be for long. Their friendliness was so complete that we nearly cried when we left the place.

Two weeks later when the bulge was being pressed back, I drove around the periphery again, and stopped to see what had happened to this family. I couldn't find La Roche. There was only a rubbled crossroad in the crease between the hills. I couldn't tell where the lane had been on which their house had stood. Our own airforce had done the job, to plug the German advance.

And a few miles away was another town through which Cassidy and I had passed in the early days of the German attack. And on my second visit a townswoman stopped me and led me to an empty store. On the floor lay all the men of the village, side by side, stiffly frozen, with bullet holes in the backs of their heads. "The same German officers who were here during the occupation came back," the woman said. "Their captain said

that the men of our village had been in the resistance. So on Christmas eve all of our men were taken—." She gestured to them, lying there. It was the first atrocity I had seen.

But these things were yet to happen on the day when Cassidy and I had lunch with the family in La Roche and drove on. Further, our artillery had taken up position. They were throwing everything they had into the pocket; we wondered whether it wasn't at random. But it made the men feel good to be standing and firing.

We reached the road that fed into Bastogne. It was jammed, so we skirted the town. By that time we were so far to the rear that we were as close to Verdun as to Luxembourg. We headed for the Twelfth Army Group's rear headquarters. There, we mentioned that we had come around the bulge, and presently we were called into the big operations room. We traced our route. Contact with the other side had become very spotty, and some of our information, the officers told us, was useful.

The next morning we followed the outer side of the wall to its anchor at Luxembourg. The front was only a few miles away, but General Bradley, the old schoolmaster, had refused to pull back from the city. The offensive was contained.

In those weeks Cassidy and I were on the roads all the time. The hairpin turns were iced over; we would drive for hours through Christmas forests. The approach to the front lines was of an overwhelming prettiness, with snowcapped villages nestling in mountain hollows, and snowburdened pines all around; day after day the numbfingered soldiers couldn't help remarking at the irony of nature, with this Christmas beauty all around us, the wintry peaceful beauty that called for sports, or indoor comradeship around a fire, and here and there along the road was a burned tank, or as you approached Bastogne there were pieces of bodies still in the branches of a jagged split tree.

On one of the roads near Bastogne we found the remains of Cassidy's Twenty-Eighth Division; the officers and their headquarters company had escaped together; they had set up in correct style in a tavern, with the G numbers on the various upstairs doors, though they had no troops to command and were acting as a company holding the road.



Half a mile forward was their roadblock, and we saw a middle-aged captain laboriously arrange a couple of flat mines behind a log he had dragged across the road. "There!" he said as if it were a personal war. And that afternoon we saw a German armored vehicle come past the captain's roadblock. A couple of bazooka men fired at it from a haystack beside the tavern. We saw the hit, and the vehicle spurting flames, with munition popping out of it; we saw two men run into a nearby farmhouse, all under our fire.

That was the furthest lapping of the German wave.

* * *

A steady guest at the Ninth Air Force hotel was a citizen of Wisconsin named Frank Donghe, press agent for the Fifth Infantry Division. He had a lean deer-stalker's look as he maneuvered through Luxembourg with a heavy hand-carved German rifle slung over his back. Donghe paid for our hospitality by tipping us off to "action"; one evening he passed word that the jumpoff for the counterattack on the bulge was about to take place. His division was in position to bite into the German's extended neck. There would be a rivercrossing that night, opening the attack.

Cassidy and I set out to cover this action. We drove in blackout half through the night, getting lost a dozen times. Once we followed an indicated road that deteriorated into tiretracks across the snow and ended in a mountain snowdrift. But somehow we stumbled through to the assembly points, at about three in the morning. The men were grouped in small batches, numb, silent, waiting along a ditch. They were too tired to curse. They had to carry assault boats down a steep incline, and they slithered and stumbled, braking themselves as they slid down the icy path with the heavy boats dragging them. Occasionally a growled bitter curse flashed through the silence like a match against the dark.

We slid down the bank to where another detail was trying to set up a sectional footbridge across the stream. The work proceeded with nightmarish slowness. A rope forgotten, sent for

up the hill, a section swept away by the sucking stream, men dropping half asleep in the snow, and yet plodding on with a fatal numb misery that would welcome cessation of life.

The bridge reached only partway across, and daylight had begun to show, and with the first touch of light the enemy artillery opened, covering the hilltop. The assembly points were under precise fire. Trees crashed on vehicles parked in the woods; men slithered through the crusted snow, seeking cover.

It seemed suicidal to embark, to cross that little stream in the face of prepared fire. We were sure the troops would be picked off, decimated as they landed. And there would be no way back.

Cassidy and I found an isolated tree, near the bottom of the slope. It afforded slight protection. We sat there on the snow, a few yards from the river, and watched the first boat wobble across the stream. The men all seemed to get ashore unhurt, and they spread across a field, firing as they moved. Their objective was a farmhouse at the far end.

With agonizing slowness, other boats were following. The footbridge had been abandoned, though we heard that another unit upstream had managed to get their bridge strung across.

A few inches from Cassidy's thigh, a hole appeared as from a finger poked into the snow. It took us a second to realize that we were a sniper's target. We huddled on the other side of the tree, trying to melt ourselves into the trunk. Now shells began to fall on the field where we sat. It was a pattern shelling, and the craters formed at equal distances, in a straight line on our left, then at right angles to it, half boxing us. We sat paralyzed. I thought of the Jew in Paris who had told me how he had marked off the streets on his map, from day to day, as the Germans progressed methodically through the ghetto.

Cassidy was more exposed than I, for it was on his side that the sniper had fired. And as we sat there, I felt somehow that I had dragged him into this awful needless night of danger, that our reckless projects had always been mine; I must have said something to that effect. He grinned, with that half-sour half-deprecating grin of newspapermen. "Listen, Meyer, I'm here for the same reason as you are."

And I realized this is a kind of arrogance we have, of believing ourselves sometimes the only driven ones. Indeed, his reason for being here was purer than mine, for he had no need to prove



himself. He was there as a reporter. I was there, as I had been in every situation of danger, out of a terrible bottom need to join with the war, to prove myself.

I realized that in these weeks with Cassidy, in our whole adventure around the bulge, I had even while carrying out my newspaperman's function been achieving for myself a sense of equality with a goy. I had cherished the Jew-and-Irishman legend. And that was the way for many Jews in the war. It was in a measure a healing experience for those who, like myself, had the Jewish complex overextended.

As we sat there in the plastered field we were friends; each knew he was fully appreciated by the other for exactly what he was, with all his weaknesses. I had attained, for once in my life, a straight relationship with a goy.

A boat had returned, and two wounded men were staggering up the bank toward us; the nearest aid station was on top of the hill. One of the wounded men flopped in the snow as a shell hit the field; he was a length away from us. We raised him between us and somehow between shellbursts got up the hill.

* * *

Wright's hotel had become noted, and bigname correspondents came to make their sorties from the plush airforce press camp so conveniently accessible to all the fronts. In those days, Vincent Sheean appeared at the hotel. We made a few jeep trips together. He was jumpy at any kind of fire but wouldn't allow himself to hang back or leave; he was an old hand who knew you had to go through to the end of an experience; a reporter could always find justification for stopping at division or battalion, but if he went forward he found there was always more, that he had been right in going on.

Once we passed an entire night amongst the snowdrifts with a unit attacking a hill; it was an attack that petered out and got lost in the snow while lanes were being ploughed, shoulder-high;

and then the attack got going again, and halted again while someone went back trying to make contact with a reinforcement outfit that hadn't shown up, and somewhere during that night in the daze and the freeze the subject came out that had been stuck between us all through that week together. I don't recall apropos of what, but Sheean said, "You know I still believe in the Arab cause in Palestine." And I said, "Yah." As a patrol moved forward, we moved with it, crouching along the wall of snow, and that was the end of the discussion, we never touched it again, though we shared a jeep all the while he was in Luxembourg.

One night in some farmhouse where a platoon was laid out on the floor for a couple of hours before an attack, I took off my shoes, and when we were poked up in the dark to get moving I must have put on another man's right shoe by mistake; I noticed days later that it was a size too big for me; I finished the war with it, and never stopped wondering how the other man felt in my smaller shoe.

* * *

I have debated with myself whether to tell the story that I have to tell now, and as in every case in which I had hesitated, I have in the end compelled myself not to withhold what is troublesome, for the catharsis not only for myself but for Jews and for humanity lies through the revelation of every malformation of the human spirit brought about by the forces that influence our behavior.

One day I received from my home office a note suggesting that I look up a certain general whose father was an aged Hebrew-school teacher in Denver. There were very few Jewish generals, and this was the only one on the German front. But in terms of legend he made up for the scarcity of Jews of high military rank, for he was the commander of a crack armored division.

His tanks had been the first to pierce the Siegfried line and



enter Germany, and he had announced his ambition to lead them, the first into Berlin. He was said to be hard and brilliant, a general who was not an academy man but a pure soldier risen from the ranks, through the army's own officer-training system, after enlistment and re-enlistment beginning with the first world war. Surely there was a personality story for me.

His division was in the Aachen sector. One afternoon I talked Cassidy into the trip; he could get a tank story. The general's headquarters occupied a baronial estate, on a hill. I sought out the press officer, who was a round-faced Irishman with the glossy politeness of an ex-advertising executive. "You understand," I said, "the personality story is of special interest to my outfit because of the Jewish angle."

I had learned by then to be able to utter the word Jewish or Jew without the slightest fore-hesitation, without a drop in tone, or a self-conscious emphasis. And it is very strange how much effort it takes to be able to say the word Jew like any other word. I had noticed in myself when I began the war assignment that before certain people one said Jewish Telegraphic Agency as readily as Associated Press, and before others, without knowing them, without knowing why, I would find myself preferring to use my identity as a correspondent of the Overseas News Agency.

With some people, after the shortest conversation, I discovered in myself an impulse to drop my voice when the word Jew came, and with others I found myself using it too often or stressing it with a kind of defiance; with some, I even caught myself using euphemisms such as "my people".

And this was a case in which I at once felt a difficulty in the conversation. When I spoke the word Jew, it seemed to me that we ceased to look each other in the eye. The press agent said he would ask the general about the matter.

After a few hours he let us know through an assistant that the general would be glad to give us the interview about tanks but that he didn't care to have a personality story about himself. Well, that sort of modesty was a man's privilege, and I was ready to let the personality feature drop. But in writing the interview about tanks it would be only normal to fill in a few details of the general's background. I already knew something of it, and I would not, ordinarily, have bothered to ask permission to use the facts of which I was aware. But such is the oversensitiveness on

the Jewish subject that I suddenly felt I had better make sure the general had no objection to my saying that he was of Jewish origin. I put this to the press representative.

My question seemed to make him unhappy. He began a series of circumlocutions with the object, it seemed, of persuading me that the story would be better if there were no personal points at all about the general. I said would he mind asking the general about my special point.

Late in the afternoon we had our interview. I had not yet received a reply about my "special point". There were a few people present during the interview, and the whole atmosphere was so stiff and strange that I didn't feel free to ask a direct question of that sort. But the general was indeed everything we had been led to hope for, a hickory type, bold, vigorous, utterly concentrated in mechanical warfare. His soldiering record was a model legend.

He gave us an excellent story about the defects in our tanks and the way our men had outfought the Germans despite our inferior weapon, soon to be replaced by the new Sherman tank. After dinner, the press agent suggested to me that there was a man on the staff who had been with the general a long time and could give me any personal information I needed. This officer was amiable, and easier to talk to. I told him frankly that my outfit wanted a story about the Jewish general, the first to cross the Siegfried line.

"Come to think of it," the officer said, "I believe I've seen him occasionally at Presbyterian services."

Well then, I could understand something of the constraint I had encountered. But even if the general was a convert to Christianity, he need have no objection to my mentioning that he was a Jew by origin. It was not that I wanted to be insistent on claiming a man who had become prominent; indeed under the circumstances I felt we would probably drop the story. But the whole atmosphere had become so strange that I found myself wondering whether my office hadn't made some mistake in the original information. I wanted to ask one direct question of the general himself: would he mind my saying he was of Jewish birth? Surely no one could be offended at such a question. But I never seemed to get the opportunity.

We left in the morning. The more I thought about the matter,



the more dissatisfied I felt. Finally I wrote to my home office, asking them to check the original statement on the general's background. My office replied that the background was an immigrant Jewish family. Like my own, I supposed.

Then I determined on a last stroke for the sake of clarity. I wrote a full and frank letter to the general. I received a frank response. He didn't want it mentioned that he was of Jewish origin.

I wrote a tank story and dropped the matter. But it remained in my mind, and my mind kept analyzing the little I knew. Was it that a career in the army would have been so much more difficult for a Jew openly a Jew? Was it because of some psychic wound in the man's youth, resulting in this drastic self-amputation?

It was rare enough for a boy out of the bosom of a melamed's family to engage in an army career. Perhaps there had been family opposition. Or perhaps this was the story of a boy running away from other youngsters calling him a yid, and, to get as far away as he could, becoming a soldier, concentrating bitterly, rising through the toughest odds to this top rank.

It was only a ghastly wrestling that could have ended in a man's suppressing so much of himself. I felt that in this instance the problem transcended privacy, for there came a denouement that provided an ironic comment on the question of assimilation which continuously confronts us all.

A few months later, after we had crossed the Rhine and when our armored divisions were racing toward Berlin, there was the story of his death. I had passed over the very road on which he was killed, for in those days large territories were pierced, laced through by armored units, left to be combed by the infantry which followed.

I had passed with an armored unit which broke open the way to Gotha, leaving German troops pocketed behind us. At moments, little units of German troops had burst out onto that road and caught isolated American vehicles.

The general had come scouting this road, seeking a route for his division, which had a parallel objective. Two German tanks had emerged from the woods and captured his party. As the general advanced to give up his pistol, lowering his hand to open the holster, a nervous German had let go a burst of machinegun fire. The general was killed.

The press made much of the story. Reporters found his father, the aged Hebrew-school teacher in Denver, and the reb delivered a Biblical eulogy for his son who had, strangely enough, fallen at the end of Passover.

The obituaries universally emphasized his being the son of a rabbi.

Perhaps some will feel it is wrong of me to tell this about a man who is dead. I tell it because these are struggles that concern mankind. I do not name the man because it is not my purpose to call attention to his person, but to the moral value of his experience. Matters of this kind, painful as they may be, must be discussed; otherwise they will remain forever psychic cancers, ugly secret growths that our people had so long buried in their souls. I tell this because it may somewhere bring self-understanding to a Jew going through the same struggle, or to any person who has been forced by circumstance to wish to obscure the connections to which he was born. If in the end the story of the general's inner conflict leads others toward self-clarification, the pain that was surely there will not have been lost.

And there was a converse incident. Just after the siege of Bastogne was broken, Will Lang of *Life,* who knew of my constant search for stories of Jewish fighters, gave me a lead on a "Super-Jew." (My agency's press code-name was Supernews; the nickname was inevitable.) "Do you know who broke the siege of Bastogne?" said my friend. "A tank commander named Abrams. He stood up in the hatch of the lead tank, raised his arm like Moses, and motioned the column forward. And they went in."

The next day I found Col. Creighton Abrams on a hillside near Bastogne; he was trying out his Christmas present from the army—a brand-new latest-model Sherman. He was to be the first to use it in the field.

I climbed into the tank, and we churned through the snow, up slopes, along ridges, making loops and figure eights like ice-skaters. He played with the tank like a kid with a Christmas toy.

I told Abrams I wanted to do a story about him. I'm sure



I said the words, "I'm especially interested in the Jewish angle," but from what appeared afterwards, the tank noise may have drowned me out.

I sent the article. That story started a flood of material about Abrams, who emerged as one of the personalities of the war.

Some weeks later. Will Lang told me he was doing a picture-story for *Life* on Abrams. "But you know, there's something odd—we made a mistake. Actually, he's not a Jew. It's an old Scottish family name."

It must be wonderful, I thought, to have a psyche so healthy that one doesn't mind mistakenly being called a Jew.

* * *

The bulge was nearly erased. Cassidy went back to Paris for a while and the jeepmate question rose again. This time it was to lead me to an experience of quite a contrary sort.

A French photographer had appeared at the press camp. The French somehow found things difficult with our PRO's, partly because they spoke another language. Moreover, Wright's camp had a special reaction to the French ever since a correspondent from a French agency had applied to go on a flight mission, only to fall into an epileptic fit just before the takeoff; his concealment of his disability could have mortally endangered the pilot, had his seizure taken place on the plane.

Besides suffering for the misdeed of his predecessor, this Frenchman was additionally handicapped by belonging to that unpopular breed—photographers. Every correspondent knew that a photographer was a nuisance in a jeep. Photographers were always wanting to stop and take pictures. Besides, they were always wanting to go where there was action because you can't take war pictures at a division commandpost.

So I had a new jeepmate.

Erik was an elfin, curly-haired fellow, an escaped prisoner of war of 1940 and a veteran of the maquis. He was a Jew. Our first trip was to Donghe's division for another promised takeoff.

An attack is still imagined as a big push forward by waves of yelling men backed by ponderous irresistible war machines.

We reached battalion headquarters and were told that Company E was gathered in a woods nearby. We would easily see the turnoff to the woods on account of the field of German dead. For the Germans had made their attack a few days before and run into a troop of combat engineers who had waited until they could see the frost of the enemy's breath. Then they had mowed them down, a whole mess of them, we'd see the dead Jerries thick in the snow.

We saw them. They were lumped over the snowy pasture like the little mounds of fertilizer a peasant spots over his field.

The conventional attitude was to hate them even when they were dead. You were supposed to say the only good German is a dead German and to gloat at the sight of their corpses.

They were by no means the first we had seen, but sometimes a peculiar conformation brings out the meaning in the long-familiar, and this was such a time. Erik and a GI wandered through the field, making a check-over for souvenirs, and they said the proper hating things. But neither of them had conviction in their voices. For like all conventional attitudes this only covered complex subterranean feelings, many of which would never be expressed, and many of which would come out years later in the attitudes and actions of the soldiers who now looked at these dead.

Just now, one mumbled with the necessary vindictiveness, the stinking bastards, the lousy krauts, serves them right. But a dropped word or a silence sometimes conveyed another feeling, of plain brute pity. The poor dumb stupid bastards, to have had to die like this.

You walked among them, scattered as they were all over the field, and even with a Jew of Europe beside you, you didn't find yourself gloating at the way they'd caught it—these little corpses, coated and helmeted and strapped, with their trenchshovels tied behind, and their gas masks, and their dinner kits, and their trenchknives, and their binocular cases, their guns, their ammo belts, their sacks on their backs. The eternal soldier, laden down and in death always so futile with his bits and scraps of human device. Their helmets, with three, four shellholes where the shrapnel had pierced. This one, with a section of helmet can-



opened, and a piece of brain hanging out. And this one, with helmet gone and face gone, and only the back half of the clean hollow skull remaining. And this one with his head dug into his arms, dodging the iron that killed him. And this one, just tumbling, curled into a ball, into a shellhole barely large enough for his body. And this one with his bazooka in his hands. And this one, with his frozen bloodstreaked hands holding his binoculars firmly against his eyes, to see what is hitting him.

There was an elderly man with an iron-gray mustache and an expression of final resolution, as though he had so well expected this end. And there was a very young one with his mouth open like an exhausted sleeping young peasant. Poor buggery misguided bastards, driven to this field and driven across this field with their wooden-handled grenades to throw, and their waterflasks webbed on their belts, and some of them with their map cases, and some with their iron tubes of high explosives, and a few with their mittens on.

It was difficult to hate the dead. One only felt a kind of shame for them, and the way they had made things happen.

They had caught it here on this field.

If a dead kraut had a good revolver on him or a pair of binoculars, the thing to do was to kick him over and relieve him of his equipment. The gesture was all. That reinforced the killing morale; it said let's hate the sonsabitches.

But no one took the binoculars out of the hands of the man who held them to his eyes.

Just now, from beyond the next copse, came a burst of machinegun fire, like applause. It had started in concert, as though released on signal. It was our men who were attacking now, and what we heard was the same sort of fire, coupled with shelling, that had cut down these men now dead in this field.

At the end of the field was a long finger of woods, no more than fifteen feet across, the kind of strip farmers leave between fields. A platoon was going through there now, to attack.

We made our way through the bit of woods; at the tip was a large foxhole that served as a jumpoff point. A huge husky lieutenant was yelling like in a movie. Come on fellows, come on Patrucci, get your ass out of that hole, what're you scared of, come on. The lieutenant led, half sprinting out of the hole into a spotless field of snow. In spurts and falls he got halfway

across the field, toward a further copse, the objective. Burp guns sounded in front and to the right. The snowfield was under direct observation and direct fire. Thus far, a slight dip in the contour had given the lieutenant protection. But pegholes were appearing in the snow, reaching toward him.

At intervals of half a minute, men followed, distributing themselves in the snow. Halfway across, there was a crest to the hollow, and then they would have no cover at all.

There was probably no enemy in the copse on the other side of the field, for it was under our own fire as well as that of the Germans. And from that patch, we could get at the next patch, where the enemy was nested. It would be another notch gained, all the paraphernalia dragged up to it, set for a further advance.

But the men lay halfway across, in the snow, and the bullet-pocks traced a forbidding line just in front of them. Their advance couldn't be made without stronger preparation—mortar fire on the enemy positions to keep the Germans down in their holes, to keep them from firing.

The lead man squirmed around in the snow, half rose, and came back, tumbling into the jumpoff hole. The others now returned one by one, nearly collapsing from tension as they made it. But the last man got stuck after a few moves. He lay paralyzed with fright. From our hole, the lieutenant kept calling to him.

"You hurt?"

A gasped, "Naw."

"Come on in."

"Can't."

"Come on, you can make it. We all made it."

The man lay staring at us, fifty feet away. After a while he rolled over in the snow, wiggling out of his pack. Then he half rose. Some bullets spit near him. He flopped again. He couldn't move. He would die there. The Jerries would begin to mortar the field and would spatter him.

The lieutenant began to curse. "You turd, you fart, come on in, you sonofabitch, or I'll plug you myself."

The man lay staring at us.

Suddenly Erik jumped out of the foxhole and ran to the GI. He stooped and photographed him. Then Erik got him up



and pushed him toward us. After starting the man on his way, Erik crazily stopped to pick up the soldiers's equipment, even returning for the gasmask that lay a few feet back in the snow.

When Erik jumped into the hole at last, we noticed that his shoe was knicked.

I didn't like the performance. He had saved the GI, yes, but afterward why had he lingered so self-destructively? There was a savage impulsiveness about him; his hatred of the Germans had extended in an almost pathological violence to their corpses back there in the field. It was as though he was so filled with hatred that he no longer knew where to direct his bitterness.

That was familiar. It was the hatred of oneself included in a blind fury at a senseless world. It was our Jewish hatred.

Going away from there, I learned a little about Erik. His mother's second marriage had been to a German; she had moved to Berlin some years before the war. He had a half-brother, probably in the German forces. As for his mother—it was a year and a half since he had had news of her. At that time she had been in the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

Through Erik, I saw all my own Jewish attitudes augmented, like the huge photographic enlargements where one can distinguish every pore in the skin. Now it was I who took the role of the cautious and well-balanced member of the team.

For weeks we were as though driven, hurrying from one end of the front to the other, wherever the lines seemed to be pressing forward, wherever a city was about to fall. As they fell—Cologne, Bonn, I sought out the few Jewish survivors. Erik would accompany me, with an irony toward my "Jew-mania". The few survivors were Jews married to Aryans, and even so hidden out, though sometimes there would be a half-dozen couples segregated in a last ghetto house. Erik would stand by silently as I took their names; his mother might have been in such a category, found trembling, subdued, half-starved. But despite her mixed marriage she had been taken to a camp, that he knew.

Sometimes a dropped remark would show the emotion under his irony. For while I sought to expunge some feeling of obligation in myself through my work, by reaching these people, there was for him only added pain, as he had personal associations to nearly all of these places. Yes, he knew Cologne, knew

the streets; his father had had a publishing business here for a while. And near Bonn, Erik suddenly guided me to a suburb where he wanted to look up someone—a German woman who had been a close friend of his mother.

We found the woman at last; she had been twice bombed out and was living in a little rear flat; she was a teacher. She brought out a card received from his mother, from Theresienstadt. But this card too had come about a year and a half ago.

He held it in his hand, looked at the small neat writing. In good health, it said. And she was trying to occupy herself with the children of the camp.

"Come on," Erik said, as though by our haste we could bring the army nearer that area.

* * *

With the crossing of the Rhine everyone felt the war was won. And there was now a distilled bitterness toward the Germans who kept on fighting, killing when it was all over. Erik became more furiously impetuous every day. We had traveled up to the northern end of the front for the big airborn Ruhr operation; in the south our troops were about to penetrate Frankfort-am-Main. It was just before Passover and I was as usual in search of a Jewish holiday feature.

I thought of Frankfort, for it was the historic center of German Jewry, the birthplace of the modern symbol for the Jews —the Rothschild family. The capture of Frankfort on Passover would be a story. And suddenly I recalled that there was a rabbi chaplain, a refugee who had come from Frankfort. I checked and discovered that it was actually his division that was about to enter the city.

I imagined how it would be with the homecoming of the chaplain, crossing the Main with the advance guard, maybe a few Jewish GI's among them, finding the handful of ghostly remaining members of the city's Jewish community, and setting up a Passover seder for them and the GI's together.



Erik too was of a mind to go to Frankfort. "It's not far from Weimar," he said.

"Weimar?" I asked.

"The troops that take Frankfort will probably head for Weimar. Buchenwald is just by Weimar. Don't you want your Jew story at Buchenwald?"

We had to drive the entire length of the Rhine to reach Frankfort before sundown for Passover. The river road was beautiful, in peacetime undoubtedly one of the world's most pleasant drives. We followed it now, glancing at the castles on the banks, and at the island of the Lorelei. What a peaceful country, soft in spring. It was unbelievable that so much evil had risen from this land. In that moment I sensed the deep psychic truth that lies in folk legendry. For truly the Lorelei land was the symbol of the German soul, the depth of evil hidden under the pretty surface of sentiment.

At intervals bridges were missing; we detoured endlessly, lost our way a dozen times, and yet just before sundown we approached Frankfort. I found the division commandpost. The first troops had just crossed the river. I was certain my chaplain was over there, perhaps already organizing the seder. There was not a moment to lose. I pestered the PRO, the officers—had anyone seen the chaplain? Where was the Passover service?

"Why, he's with division rear. They're still back in Luxembourg."

I went into Frankfort and found the remaining Jews in a few ghetto houses. There were a hundred and six people out of a former population of forty thousand.

It was strange how the Jewish GI's had already gravitated toward them. But according to military regulations, these Jews were German civilians, and fraternization with them was forbidden. So the GI's had left packages of matzoth for them on the doorsteps of the ghetto houses. The Jewish soldiers watched from across the street as the last Jews of Frankfort slipped out, still fearful, and picked up the Passover food.

Now America was on the autobahn. We wheeled onto it for the end ride.

Erik never spoke of the possibility of finding his mother.

Theresienstadt, where she had last been heard from. was in Czecho-Slovakia, exactly halfway between us and the Russians, and directly in the center of what the Germans still held. But we were moving faster than the Russians. Especially now that we were on the autobahn, we might get across Germany to Czecho-Slovakia in a few days. Or, she might have been moved to one of the other camps; from here on she might be anywhere if still alive.

We heard that Col. Abrams was spearheading his section of the Fourth Armored Division along the autobahn, and we caught up with them. Then began the coda of the last weeks of the war, where all war's madness seemed to be condensed, recapitulated with the most violent contrasts of elation and horror. On the map we saw Weimar, with its suburb of Buchenwald ahead of us. But as we rode on the beautiful five-lane double highway, it was clear that the GI's were at last feeling that the super-race had something of a claim. For this they understood, this was better than anything we had in America except a little stretch of super-highway near Pittsburgh, which few of the boys had seen. Their respect for the Germans took form here; if the Jerries could do a thing like this, they were our sort of people.

For some of the men, it is true, a bitterly resentful feeling was mingled with the admiration: Why did the Germans have to make a war and get people killed when they could have stayed home and built things like their autobahn? The GI's did not know that slave labor had helped build it.

Suddenly the armored column came to a halt, the vehicles piling up as at a stop sign. We nosed toward the front, and beheld the jagged broken arches of a concrete viaduct collapsed into a ravine. The men looked at the ruins of the magnificent structure, cursing the sonsabitch Nazis with a combination of frustration for being halted in our advance, and disgust for a people who could commit such a sacrilege as to blow up this beautiful piece of engineering. And inevitably the reaction came as they put themselves in the place of the enemy. The hurt it must have been, the nerve it took to destroy the most beautiful thing in their country, to blow up every bridge, every viaduct of the autobahn.

But their sympathy didn't have long to flower. From a town



on our right, the ambush opened. Before the men could button down their metal hatches, several lay broken, spilling out of the tops of their vehicles.

There was nowhere to turn for cover. The column was lined up solid on the road. On the right was a steep drop to the fields, and we now noticed several small enemy tanks firing at us from there. On the left was a heavily wooded almost vertical hillside. Snipers were shooting from the trees.

In the column, every man with a weapon was frantically firing. Officers were emptying their revolvers at the trees.

Erik and I crawled under our jeep, following the example of men from other unprotected vehicles in the column.

Abrams whirled up. His tanks had by now got the range of the enemy. The battle lasted about an hour. Then the German tanks in the field were dead, and the shooting from the village had ceased. A dozen fires arose inside the smashed town. We walked there; a dazed housewife sat with her children huddled around her, watching her house burn. In her lap she held a wide pan containing a freshly baked applecake, the only item she had rescued. "Are you hungry?" she said, still dazed, offering us helpings of the cake.

All the acts of war seemed normal now; a kind of elevation seized us, as on the day of the breakthrough in Normandy. The armored column rolled on, in the heart of Germany, through beautiful hill country, and sometimes there wasn't a shot fired all day long.

We passed through Gotha and when we halted the following night we ran into a number of cadaverous refugees, milling along the road. They were like none we had ever seen: skeletal, with feverish sunken eyes, shaven skulls. One of them approached our jeep and began to talk. Polsky, Polsky, he kept saying, and then in broken German he tried to tell us about a place we had to see, where he had been prisoner. He motioned. Only a short way. He would take us. No more Germans. No more SS.

We began to understand something of his tale. People buried in a big hole. Death commando. "Come on," said Erik. "It's a camp."

We motioned him onto the jeep, and following his directions, turned down a lane. After about half a mile the road began to have that strangely forbidding atmosphere so soon recognized at the front. There were twigs and leaves from trees that had been hit; nobody had passed here, since. We pulled up. It was too dangerous. The road was possibly mined, or we might still run into Germans. We drove back to the village, gave the Pole some cigarettes and chocolate, and told him to meet us in the morning.

In the morning we tried again. Another division had come into the area during the night, linking up with the Fourth Armored. The main road was now clear as far as the town of Ohrdruff. Our Pole directed us to a camp on the outskirts of the town.

We drove through the gate and halted. A circle of dead men lay there, in the striped slave uniforms which we now saw for the first time; these cadavers were fleshless; in back of each tight-skinned shaven skull was a bullethole.

The Pole opened the door of a shed. There was a cordwood stack of stiff naked human bodies, a stack as high as we stood. The bodies were flat and yellow as lumber. A yellow disinfectant was scattered over the pile.

We had known. The world had vaguely heard. But until now no one of us had looked on this. Even this morning we had not imagined we would look on this. It was as though we had penetrated at last to the center of the black heart, to the very crawling inside of the vicious heart.

Long ago I had known the Chassidic tale of the child who went into the forest and found himself within the primordial beast, and there he saw the very heart of evil. In this moment I understood the legend.

We walked through the dead concentration camp. Erik uttered not a word. So it was like this. So his mother had been in a place like this.

There is not often a meaning in being first, in getting somewhere first so as to rush out a moment ahead of the others with the "news"; but today I somehow knew that I had had to find and experience this without anyone's having told me what it



would be like. This was part of my personal quest. This was the source of the fear and the guilt in every human who remained alive. For human beings had had it in them to do this, and we were of the same species.

We walked to the barracks. "Typhus, typhus," the Pole repeated. The cabins were utterly vacant except for some scant filthy bits of straw on the floors. The slaves had been evacuated yesterday in trucks; the little circle of dead in the entrance were the only ones left behind; the Pole and his few companions had managed to hide out and escape.

And now from the shadows in a typhus-ridden barrack there emerged a being—a boy of about sixteen. He began to talk in Polish.

I said, "Bist a Yid?"

He was silent.

"Don't be afraid," I said in Yiddish. "We are Jews, too."

He stared at our uniforms, and looked into our faces.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"From Lublin."

The story of the boy was all the stories I was to hear in the weeks and months and years to come. The "selection" in Auschwitz. "My little brother was with me but he was too small to work. They burned him." And the trail from camp to camp. This camp was a branch of Buchenwald. The task was the construction of underground hangars, not far from here.

Did I know how he could find his relatives? He believed he had relatives in America.

I wrote down his name. It was like that from then on. I wrote down their names, and where they came from, and whom they sought—if they knew, precisely.

What did he want to do?

He wanted first to go back to Lublin to see if anyone was alive. And after that (knowing already that no one was there alive) and after that, he didn't know...

Under the straw in another barrack we found a wraith with eyes like burning coals, a Belgian, arrested for resistance; he shook ceaselessly with fever. "Don't leave me, don't leave me here alone!" We told him there would be doctors, soon.

There was more to see, the Pole told us. His German was

inadequate, but he kept motioning up the hill, beyond the camp, and finally we got into the jeep and he guided us again. There was no road. He seemed uncertain of the way, and yet persisted passionately—we had to go. He alone remained to show us. Death commando. The other workers had been killed.

On top of the hill there was a rut that gave out, and then nothing. We began to get jumpy again. There might be mines. And there might be a bitter-end SS who could pot us off. We were going to turn back when the Pole suddenly got his bearings and motioned to a clump of trees. We saw nothing. We drove there and got out and still we saw nothing special. There was indeed a half-dug pit as large as a swimmingpool, filled with ooze. Some sort of work had been going on there. Perhaps excavation for a building foundation. A section of narrow-gauge track lay beside the pit, reaching from nowhere to now here. There were some shovels and other worktools lying on the ground, all muddied over with the gray ooze.

The Pole was talking excitedly. He pointed beside the tracks, and in the mud we saw a few striped rags from prisoners' uniforms, and little heaps of cinders, then bits of bone, a half-charred body, a skull.

There was a pile of logs for fuel. Now we comprehended. The track with the logs laid across simply became a grate.

The survivor had picked up a long pole terminating in a grappling hook, and now he was pushing it around in the ooze in the pit. Presently he levered it up just far enough for us to see what was on the hook. Then he let the half-decayed human body fall back into the slime.

Now we understood. In the last weeks the SS commanders of the camp had forced a group of slaves to exhume these bodies and burn them, to destroy the evidence...

It was to the edge of this pit, some days later, that the army brought the mayor and other dignitaries of the city of Ohrdruff, good Germans who "had not known" what was being done in their land. The mayor went home and shot himself.

Now we knew. Nothing afterward told us more. Buchenwald,



Bergen Belsen, Dachau—we became specialists. This was my story; Erik had his own quest in these camps. Somewhere among them, his mother might be found.

* * *

On some days we were like hounds circling the heels of the armored column, darting off on side expeditions, sniffing, returning; and in one of these expeditions we uncovered another kind of camp.

The column was rolling past an imposing farm estate; a sideroad led toward an elaborate group of modern buildings. We turned our jeep into the lane.

As we neared the buildings, we realized that the farm was a military establishment of some kind. In the doorway of the most pretentious residence stood an officer in his greatcoat, drawn up at attention. He announced that he was the colonel in command, and was surrendering to us.

The establishment was the studfarm of the Wehrmacht. He had prepared a list of the horses on the farm.

All, of course, were receiving luxurious care in their concentration camp. Prize steeds from the stables of the Aga Kahn, world-famous stallions from the stables of the Rothschilds—all were there.

The colonel bid a soldierly farewell to his wife, and mounted our jeep. We toured the beautifully appointed stalls, saw the steeds with their grooms and their attendants and saw the delicately nurtured young.

Then, as we started off to deliver the colonel to the army, he asked whether we might care to accept the surrender of a general? The general was not attached to the camp but was passing a short leave on the farm, prior to reassignment. He had just come from the Russian front. In the morning he had seen our forces approaching, and he had decided to surrender; if we wished we could take him.

Erik and I felt that this was a matter for the army, and with

the colonel and a captain erect in our back seat we raced after the column. The provost marshall returned with us, and we were guided to the general's residence. But the general, a woman told us, had gone for a walk just after lunch. Three hours ago.

The provost marshall glowered. "He's run out on us."

Meanwhile Erik had a look in the garage. A magnificent Mercedes stood there, loaded with hampers of food, burp guns, ammunition, a couple of suitcases of clothing, and a fine leather greatcoat. The general, it seemed to us, couldn't be far away. We trailed out of the farm, after the provost marshall, but somehow the distance between our jeep and the other vehicles kept growing. Finally I stopped altogether. "That general is there," Erik said.

We went back and parked in front of his residence. At that moment Erik noticed a man walking away, behind the garage; he carried a hamper of food and the greatcoat.

"Halt!" Erik yelled, and the hamper and coat fell to the ground.

"It's his chauffeur," Erik cried, rushing after the fellow, and before I realized what was happening they had disappeared in the woods. I was convinced that was the end of Erik. Then I heard a scream. "I've got him!"

General and chauffeur emerged, with Erik behind them. The general's field glasses already hung around Erik's neck. The general's holster was empty, and Erik was now a two-gun correspondent.

We decided to take the Mercedes as a souvenir, and the chauffeur got into it, and drove ahead of us. The general sat in the jeep. In bursts, Erik told me how he had seen the man seated on a log, looking through his field glasses at a detachment of our armor that was appearing on a distant road.

Yes, the general agreed. All afternoon he had watched our armor. Colossal.

He could have got away with valuable information, Erik pointed out.

Never, said the general, had he seen such equipment. Ah, what he could have done with such equipment.

When Erik had approached, the general had reasoned that there were probably troops around. He didn't want to get involved in a messy little fight. But he could surrender only to an officer.



"He asked me if I was an officer," Erik said. "So I told him I have the grade of captain." Correspondents, of course, had only facsimile rank, being civilians, but in the German Army correspondents were actually part of the forces, so the general had considered he could properly surrender.

"The bastard wouldn't hand me his pistol," Erik said. "He just opened the flap." Now he turned, facing our prisoner. "Herr General," he announced, "we wish to inform you that you have surrendered to an ex-second-class private of the French army, who is a Jew, and that my companion is also a Jew, and we are both civilians."

The general sat stiff and silent.

The road was by now deserted, and we could follow the turnings of Abrams' column only by the tanktracks in the dust. We found the commander in the kitchen of a village house, talking to a British soldier, half starved and exhausted, who had escaped from a nearby prison camp. Abrams said the general could wait; he was taken up to a little bedroom, and there I talked to him. He had got over the affront to his rank, and was now voluble, with a kind of excited release at this denouement of his career.

His name was Edgar Roericht; he had commanded a corps of infantry in the Seventeenth Army on the Russian front. His last task had been the retreat from Galicia, under constant harassment of Russian artillery. He respected their artillery.

After that, on the way home, he had passed through Dresden. It had been the night of the allied bombardment of Dresden, and he had been for hours in an air-raid shelter with the great, aged poet Gerhard von Hauptmann.

On this night of gotterdammerung, the general said, he had reached a new understanding, an understanding of the continuity of the Germanic idea. There, in the presence of von Hauptmann who personified the ultimate tradition of the German folk, he had come to a full understanding of the war, which was symbolic of the end of an era, but was only an episode in an over-drama; this Hauptmann had envisioned, and made him understand, there in the bombshelter as Dresden was being destroyed upon them.

I listened, fascinated. These were the words from the metallic heart of this land. This was the shining negative spirit.

Roericht told how he had emerged out of that night into flattened Dresden. He had gone to the stud farm for his week

of leave, and in the morning when he had seen our armor he had in a first impulse decided to surrender. But then he had considered that such a surrender might tarnish his future military career. Yes, his future career, for the world was not done.

It would be better for him if he were taken prisoner amongst German troops, he had thought, and so he had retired to the woods, feeling that there would be ample chance for him to get away after the armored column had passed.

He was one of the younger officers, trained for the general staff after the first world war. He was the real thing, from Silesia, a Prussian; General von Seeckt was his master. In men such as von Seeckt, in the general staff, he declared, was the great continuity of the German idea. This war, he repeated, was only part of something longer—. He glanced at me with his tight, ironic smile. I encouraged him to go on. Historical developments, he reminded me, were inevitable. The industrial genius of the German, the crude power of the Russian—in this was the inevitable combination of the future. This was the vision he had seen, in the cellar with the great poet Hauptmann, on that night of gotterdammerung. This was the phoenix vision.

I listened and listened. Now I was hearing their truth from its source. For the military men of Prussia, the general staff, were the pre-condition. They were the cause, even before Hitler.

And in Ohrdruff I had seen the effect.

* * *

Our column had bypassed Buchenwald, and the infantry coming after us had liberated the camp. Erik and I drove back the next day to enter it.

Night fell as we reached Weimar, and we were directed to the renowned Elephant Haus Hotel in the central square. Goethe's hostelry stood intact amidst ruins, and in the lobby the white-jacketed clerk greeted us with cosmopolitan hauteur, regretting that no rooms were available. The American officers had already requisitioned everything, he said, and out of force of habit—for there had been only one day of change in his world—he added,



to prove his point, that everything was occupied except the Fuhrer's personal suite.

Erik pounced upon this. "Open!"

Realizing he was now helpless to prevent a sacrilege, the clerk led us silently up to the second floor. Obsequious now, he informed us that these rooms had been guarded for the Fuhrer's occasional visits to Weimar. No one else had used them.

There were three rooms, with a magnificent bathroom equipped with oversize fixtures. The rooms were furnished with an impersonal elegance.

It seemed the last obscene irony to come to Hitler's bed directly after Ohrdruff, and we felt it should have been the typhus-ridden wraith that had crawled out from the straw who should sleep here, tonight.

In the morning we entered Buchenwald. Much has been told, and many survivors have themselves told of Buchenwald. The crematorium, the tattooed human skin used for lampshades, the laboratory for medical "experiments", all that has become familiar, but what struck us most seems already to have been forgotten by the world.

For there were two Buchenwalds, the upper and the lower, separated by a high barbed-wire fence; and the upper camp meant possible life, and the lower camp was death. In the upper area, the "permanent" camp, were the early political detainees, the criminals, the perverts, and the power-holders of the camp. Their Buchenwald was not too utterly removed in horror from other prisons known to mankind, for here every inmate had his place to lie, sometimes even a cot to himself, and his place at a table, for eating. Here the prisoners bore human resemblance, they had strength enough to walk around.

The lower camp received the transports from Auschwitz, and sent out transports to places like Ohrdruff; it was from this well of uttermost misery that the about-to-die tottered forth to replace the dead.

As one entered the lower camp the very atmosphere, even outdoors, assaulted one as the atmosphere of a closed charnel house. Here were the barracks where men lay on shelves one atop another, where the dead sank to the bottom during the night

and the living lay on them, where the same tin served for body waste at night when one couldn't go out, and for feeding in the day; back of these barracks the dead lay heaped as the garbage, and the gaunt creatures who wobbled past the cadavers mentioned to us that the livers and other edible parts would disappear, if the bodies lay there overnight.

As we entered one swarming barrack I unthinkingly brought out a handful of chocolate bars; the creatures were upon me, shrieking, tearing at each other and at me, and I was astonished at the power, the tenacity of their fleshless limbs. Their violent eyes, their mouths would have devoured me.

These were nearly all Jews. From Hungary, for the Poles had been taken earlier and were dead.

No, the human mind cannot endure this accusation; nobody wants to read about it, nobody wants to know what it was. Some days later, when I went through a duplication of this scene in Dachau, I spoke to a German woman who kept a little store just outside the camp gates, twenty steps from the last train that still stood there half filled with rigid bodies. That woman was the whole world answering, before and since, when she said, "How could I know anything about it?" For like the mayor of Ohrdruff, one couldn't face it and live.

No one will ever truly know, outside. Even the Polish film made to show the world what Auschwitz was like shows something closer to a girls' college than to reality.

For a week of days, in Buchenwald, I listened to their stories until I felt that my mind faintly reflected their minds. It was a composite of trains running three-tracked into smoking crematoria, of remote Polish villages whose mud ruts were filled with human bodies, of a German officer attentively lining up a number of Jewish children, patting their heads until they were precisely one behind the other, and then putting a single bullet through the line; and through every image I could see the brown, earnest, undeniable eyes of a survivor telling me the story, and over and over each image was stamped with the ever-recurring line, "I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes."

I will tell again the story of one of them, perhaps because he was a writer, and I fearfully saw myself in him.

By his appearance, one would not have believed him capable of surviving a single week of hardship. But like all the survivors



he had passed through sieve after sieve of death, for five, six years continuously, six million had fallen through, and he was one of the last bits of cinder somehow adhering to the mesh.

He was small of stature and small-boned, like a slum-bred thirteen-year-old boy; he had an intellectual face, widening upward from a delicate chin to a broad forehead; he wore glasses.

His name was Mordecai Striegler, he was thirty, and had already published a good deal before the war. He lived through the bombing of Warsaw, which was only a remote overture to his career in horror. As the German army approached the city, Mordecai helped build barricades, and he fought together with the Polish resistance on the barricades, but no sooner had the first Nazi tank pierced the barrier, Striegler told me, than the Poles themselves pointed him out, crying, "Jew."

Then he had been loaded onto a truck, taken to jail, kicked, slugged. Then the Nazis took a razor blade and cut neat swastikas on his cheeks and forehead—just deep enough for the blood to trace the lines. The marks were still there.

For a few weeks, his company of Jews was sent out daily to work. The city's gas reservoirs were aflame; they had to climb the smoke-choked tanks to fight the fire, sometimes for twenty-four hours on end. Many died. He survived.

The survivors were stuffed into a boxcar, and Mordecai thus came to his first labor camp at Praga. There was a succession of camps. In each place there was the daily lineup for selection of those fit to live, and the random massacre of the rejected; the pointing finger, you to this line, you to that line, and presently the first line would be mowed down, the second line marched off to work.

"I don't know how many times I went through such lines, how many different ways I escaped after I had been put into the death group. Sometimes the inspections were at night; they would come into the barracks and line us up naked and have us turn before them, inspecting us on all sides, and if they saw a blemish on a man he went to the deathheap. I looked stronger then."

From the first camp, he escaped, together with a dozen others. They made their way on foot, sixty miles to the Russian border. It was still the time of peace between Germany and Russia; sometimes the Russian border would suddenly open to Jewish refugees, at other times it was closed. Within a few days, sixty

thousand Jews trying to flee Poland lay in that narrow passage, without food, without shelter. One night Mordecai crept into a village on the German-controlled side, seeking food. He was caught.

Again he was in a slave camp, this time building a bridge at Malkine. And queerly, when the job was done, they let him go. He returned to Warsaw, recovered a suitcase full of manuscripts, and got on a train, hoping to reach his parents' home at Zamelsch, near Lublin.

Mid-journey, SS men halted the train, hauled out the Jews, stripped them, and pushed them at bayonet point through the streets of a wayside town. "I still have the bayonet marks in my back.... Everything was gone. My manuscripts I saw flying in scraps in the wind. Then blood was all over my eyes and I saw nothing. The bayonets pushed me and I stumbled onward, and they kept kicking and beating me, all naked, and I fell in the gutter, and they thought I was dead."

When the SS had finished with their sport and gone, a few village Jews came out of hiding. One of them found Striegler, carried him home and nursed him for several weeks. While in that town, Striegler saw Jewish prisoners of war, taken while in the Polish Army, herded into the fields and massacred by the thousands. But these passing, incidental massacres were a continuous underflow in his years of walking through death.

He left that town and made his way home. There, he and his father were seized and put to forced labor. They dug tanktraps on the Soviet border. "We were digging as close to the border as that wire is to us," he said, pointing to the Buchenwald fence a few yards away. "The Ukrainian guards had a little game with us. They would order a few Jews to go pick up a plank that lay just by the fence. When the Jews reached the board, the guards would shoot, saying they were trying to escape into Soviet territory." So many more were killed, and he lived.

Mordecai was learning how to escape from such camps. It was not too difficult in those first years. He managed it again, though his father remained in the camp and never returned from it.

But there was no escape from Germany's Europe. Eventually he wandered home, and a new labor order awaited him. He obeyed, fearing that his mother and sisters would otherwise



be seized. They later were taken and gassed and burned, but in 1940 death seemed not yet certain for all Jewry.

This time he was sent to farm labor, digging ditches in swampland. And after half a year in a camp, he was permitted to live at home, walking nine miles daily to a forced job. Then he was sent to another camp where he slaved for a year on coal piles.

"And then they began to Jew-clean the area. The herding began again, and the mass shooting. They herded us to Prohovnyeh, there was a field, there was a selection again of those fit to work, the others were told to lie down on the field, and this time I was among them. Machineguns began to shoot into the field; in the dust, in the screaming, in the spurting blood, I ran to the other group—to those selected for labor."

He lived, again. But in 1942 the Germans decided to clean all the remaining Jews out of the Lublin area, centering them for slaughter in the Ishbitza ghetto. "Our camp was put on the march. We had to go fifteen miles, in a column ten abreast. They told us to run, and they rode alongside the column and fired into it all the time, our comrades dropped around us and we filled up to ten abreast and ran, and they shot, shot, shot." He lived through that, too.

Then came days of orgiastic massacre. Jews from the entire region, families in wagons, women pushing their babies in carts, trainloads of Jews, columns of Jews on foot were herded into the town, by the hundreds, by the thousands, and they were butchered anywhere, on the streets, in the fields, in the square. They were shovelled into mass graves—some still alive. "They shot, shot, shot. I saw a German officer go up and look over a pretty little girl of thirteen who had just been taken off a train. Then he calmly took out his bayonet knife and ripped up her belly. I saw this."

Mordecai lived. He worked in a munitions factory for sixteen months. Again, the Russians approached and the slave workers were evacuated. This time he was taken to Buchenwald, where he managed to live for ten months, in the last accident of the bit of carbon adhering to the mesh.

A few dozen children had somehow been smuggled into Buchenwald—one by a saddler who bribed a Nazi officer with the entire contents of his shop, to be permitted to carry his baby with

him, hidden in a sack; another by a doctor who hid his son in a bed of contagion which the Germans didn't care to inspect; and other children had come in the more recent deportation trains. Mordecai Striegler had occupied himself with these children, assembling them secretly at night in his barrack, giving them instructions in Yiddish and Hebrew.

And when he wasn't busy with the children, this indestructible Jew of Warsaw had tried to organize "literary evenings", "cultural meetings", during which the cadaverous creatures tried to whisper to each other poems and bits of history that they had known, in order to keep their minds from dying.

So he had lived, until the Americans came.

I recalled the general whose continuity I had comprehended, only a few days before. Slowly I was coming to understand what was indestructible in the human world.

On my first day in the upper camp of Buchenwald I had sought out some of the Jewish leaders, and they had organized a committee, making their headquarters in the neat SS laboratory building where the most distinguished physicians of Vienna and Prague had been required to conduct the SS injection experiments.

Now the laboratory rooms were free for the use of the various camp committees. I sketched out a form on a sheet of paper—Name, Homeplace, Name and Address of one person most urgently sought. I urged the leaders to organize the collection of this information by barracks, and to secure me a complete roster of the survivors.

This social worker's task became an obsession with me. From a practical point of view it is true that it would not have made much difference whether these first lists were compiled at once or some weeks later. But the weight of human anxiety exists, and time is a factor in it. I was responding first to the pressure from the survivors themselves, for like the boy who had crept out of the darkness at Ohrdruff, every refugee whom I met had a single, dominant anxiety—to seek some link on earth. This came before food and shelter. Indeed, many immediately



took to the roads on foot, tottering from one camp to another in the vague hope that they would find a living relative, somewhere.

There were heartbreaking stories of children seeking their mothers; in a few cases they found them, and these cases were so endlessly overplayed in the radio dramas of American Jewish organizations for the next few years that Europe and its DP camps must have seem to the mind of the American Jew to be one large happy reunion center where every half-hour another distracted mama called out a long-forgotten childish pet name, whereupon a curlyhaired five-year-old who had disguised her dark eyes for blue eyes in order to survive as a Polish child under the name of Wanda, rushed to the call of Bubaleh into mama's arms.

No, it wasn't exactly like that. In every camp the wraiths of Jews crowded around my jeep, and I don't know where the custom started, but as they heard I had been to one camp and another they began to write their names in pencil on my jeep—on the hood, on the fenders, until the entire vehicle was covered with the scrawls of the survivors in Hebrew and Roman characters—their names, the names of their towns of origin, or of the camps where they were to be found.

This was the beginning of the scrawled legendry I was to see all during the coming years on the walls of every cabin, every office, every DP center, every hospital where the Jews passed, on the walls of every way-station on the secret route to Palestine. They wrote their names out of the passion of survival, as though to prove that it was so, that they had an identity, that they were alive! And they wrote their names in the strange unflagging hope that somewhere a townsman, a relative would pass, and they would not be utterly alone in the world.

Thus they wrote their names on my jeep, and I could not but respond to their first passion by trying to organize and facilitate their search. I had hundreds of sheets mimeographed in the form that I had made out in Buchenwald, and wherever I found surviving Jews I tried to organize a committee to collect their names and send the sheets on to me, or have them ready for me when I passed again.

The second motive for this activity was selfish. I recognized that I had returned to the most primitive level of a reporter's

work, like the doctor in *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* who in the end was so overwhelmed that he could accomplish nothing but the most primitive medical task—to keep the sick separated from the well. I could take their names, for to collect their names was an immediate and concrete task—I couldn't feed these people nor find them shelter nor listen to all their stories. Sometimes as they crowded around me I screamed at them almost hatefully, leave me alone! just try and write down your names!

I could take their names and forward them to New York, and there my agency could disseminate them to the Yiddish press all over the world, and Jews all over the world could scan these names, and if they found someone of their own, they could begin to seek connection.

When I returned to Buchenwald I found that the camp committee had done an excellent job. A rabbi chaplain had come into the camp and helped them with the project, and within two weeks they had several copies of a typed list that later served as a model for the definitive compilations that were made everywhere. A year later I was to film a center in Palestine where all the names had been assembled, where a great cross-index had been made, and where an entire room of clerks was busy tracing relatives for survivors; and the basic formula was still the same as I had scratched out that first day in Buchenwald.

But not all of the camps could be so well organized. Buchenwald had been a model camp in the sense of inner control; the cream of the survivors was there. In Bergen Belsen, in Dachau, the people seemed to be in such a state of psychic disintegration that they could not concentrate even on so simple a task as passing around a sheet of paper and putting their names on it. Each individual would come tearing and pulling at me—to take down his name, to listen to him, him! I tried to find the most coherent, and place the task with them, and sometimes a few sheets would be filled out. I scolded, but the work had to wait until their senses knit.

The worst camp was Bergen Belsen. Here, the rate of death after liberation was highest, and weeks after liberation the survivors complained to me that they were on a starvation ration. On one trip, however, I found that they had at last assembled



a list, which was kept where all could consult it. And while I was there, a girl appeared from some other camp, to copy the Bergen Belsen list, and leave a copy of her own. Thus little by little the work proceeded.

In all the camps I took my lists, and Erik said nothing. He made his private search in his own way. In Buchenwald there had been no women; in Dachau only a few hundred women, grouped in a single barrack. In the other camps he found out in a moment or two—an elderly woman from Berlin? no, no, there were no German Jewesses, the inmates would reply, as though he were speaking of a species long extinct, a prehistorical kind. And she was elderly? They would look at him again, with sympathy for his simple-minded hope. How could an elderly woman survive?

And so he would churn restlessly about the camps, photographing surviving Frenchmen, while I took the lists of names.

Several times we found groups on the roads. Once, in the countryside, we caught up with a deportation train halted in a field, abandoned by its guards. The surviving Jews had broken their way out, leaving the floors of the cars blanketed with the starved and the dead.

In their striped clothes they spilled over the countryside, truly like creatures from another world. They didn't even know what land they were in.

Presently an army unit would gather them up, round them up in some farmyard and feed them at last. But in the meantime Erik waited with the indulgence one has for the obsessed while I pulled out my paper forms and self-addressed envelopes, and there in the road explained to the bewildered, strayed remnants of a people that they had to fill in their names, and put the papers in the envelope, and give the envelope to any soldier.

Strangely enough, weeks later several of these envelopes turned up in the Scribe Hotel in Paris; and inside were bits and scraps of paper besides the sheets I had given them, notes scrawled by men who had nearly forgotten in all this time how to write—notes in Yiddish, Polish, Hungarian. Some we could never transcribe.

Once, the Fourth Armored caught up with a group of nearly a thousand women being marched from a factory. Their captors had fled. They were all young Hungarian girls; I gathered their

names. The leader was the daughter of a surgeon of Budapest. Her mother too was a doctor. Perhaps, perhaps, the girl insisted, they were still alive, because sometimes the Germans utilized doctors.

She told me with what perfection the roundup had been accomplished in Hungary; not with crude butchery as in Poland, but with artfulness. The census of the Jewish population had been made, and then the men had been sent their notices to report for transportation to their labor assignments. Wives and children could accompany them if they wished.

She and her mother—like almost all wives and children—had elected to accompany the head of the family. They had packed their best clothes, taken all their valuables, and reported to the train.

And even then they did not know.

When their baggage was taken from them at Auschwitz they began to know.

It seemed incredible that such a gigantic deception could have been practiced week after week, month after month upon a whole population. And yet, who was there to come back from the gas ovens, from the slave camps, to warn the remainder?

And so there had been the selection line. And she had been sent to one side, her parents to another. "But perhaps, perhaps—since they were doctors—."

And, "I was in the naked inspection line with my mother to the last. Even when naked she kept a little redcross bracelet on her arm, to show that she was a doctor. Perhaps—"

And, "When I was a little girl I travelled with my father. He used to take me on trips from Budapest to Vienna, to Prague —he was a noted surgeon. Oh, he was so full of humor, he loved life so."

And in Dachau a week later, by one of the barrack doorways, there were two gaunt wretches hunched over a little fire, cooking American Army food in a can, unmindful of the naked cadaver lying beside them, and in the doorway stood a half-naked wraith, wearing only the striped prison trousers, his shrunken torso bare. He was tottering in his last hours, his heart protruded like a fistula beneath his shrunken skin, one could see its rapid fluttery beating. And one of the lucid survivors pointed him out, whispering to me, "A famous surgeon of Budapest." At that instant,



in a spark of returned cognition, the tottering one began to shout hoarsely, with incredible last force, "No, no, I don't want to die, I want to live! to live! And then he crumpled in hysterical sobbing.

His name, I didn't dare ask.

* * *

The space between our forces and the Russian forces narrowed. There were few more camps to be liberated in the area. There was still Theresienstadt, where Erik's mother had been sent a year and a half ago, and there was Ravensbrook, the womens' camp near Berlin. We pressed forward always with the furthest extension of our lines to the Russian lines, for Theresienstadt was there in the region between.

And as this area narrowed, the Germans spoke more and more to us about the Russians. First it was only to ask us eagerly, in each city as we entered—was their zone marked for American or Russian occupation? Would we stay, or would the Russians come? And then there were the friendly, knowing ones who greeted us as amongst the better, civilized peoples who, like themselves, had a horror of barbarians. Yes, surely we would prevent their being overrun by the barbarians, prevent such a setback to civilization.

And then we heard this line coming out more and more strongly, until we knew it clearly as their last psychological attack and defense, their leader's last instruction. It came from them on every level, from the prisoners who half-expected as they surrendered to be put into American uniforms and formed into new cadres to continue the war when we met the Russians, and to the little civilians in their homes who were so happy that American soldiers would protect their daughters against the Russian ravagers.

In the area of Leipzig, as the city was about to fall, this attitude was obsessive, for the Russians were already in Berlin. In a small town at the approaches to the city, we found overnight quarters at the watchmaker's. It was a comfortable little house,

much like a shopkeeper's little home in, say, an Indiana town. The man put one of his daughters out of her room, doubling her up with her sister, and as Erik and I took possession of the room the entire family came upstairs to make us welcome.

The father was paunchy, quite characterless; his wife was a film version of the small-town pillar of righteousness: plain, somewhat work and worryworn, and with the habit of nodding to punctuate with approval everything her husband said. The daughters, fourteen and seventeen, stood silently by papa. The younger held her kewpie doll which she was removing for the night from the room.

The watchmaker was smiling, almost smirking, oozing friendliness. He was glad the war was over for his family. Quite casually, Erik asked him what was his party number? "Oh," he laughed, "in the millions. You understand, it was just a matter of business, to join the party. I am in fact an old Stahlheimer."

One of the daughters hurried and fetched his Stahlheimer veteran's uniform, to prove his veracity. But under Erik's seemingly casual questioning, it turned out that the little watchmaker had also been a member of the S.A. This too, of course, had just been a sort of social business thing like joining a lodge. Actually he felt most bitter against "those bandits" who had betrayed Germany.

The wife now daringly added a curse against lying Fuhrers.

The daughters seemed proud of how papa was explaining things and winning American friendship. All were solicitous for our comfort.

We mentioned Buchenwald, Dachau. Ah yes, they knew there were such places where criminals were taken—people who were against the government. But the watchmaker didn't concern himself with the details of such matters, as he was not a political man. He only wanted to be allowed to do his work, and earn a decent living for his family.

"But you are a member of the Nazi Party," we reminded him.

"Oh," he shrugged, smiling.

Had there been any Jews in his town, we asked.

Yes, there had been one Jewish family.

And what had become of this family?



Oh, they had gone away long ago. Disappeared.

Did he know, we asked, that six million Jews had been assassinated, their bodies burned by the Nazis?

He smiled even more broadly. Now we were joking.

We told him more. We described a slave barrack we had seen that afternoon in the yard of an aircraft factory; just before our troops came, the SS, aided by Hitler youth—kids—had set fire to the barrack and merrily shot the Polish and Czech slaves who tried to jump out of the windows of the flaming cabins. We had seen the twisted burned corpses still in their attitudes of flight.

The smirk came off his face. He saw that we were perhaps not altogether friendly. "But that is the work of bandits. We are not responsible! They controlled everything!"

"But you are a party member. You put them in power."

"Yes, we put them in power," he said. "But that was long ago. A man like myself—I am a little man—what can I do?"

The little man, der kleiner mann.

Perhaps, he said, he had to believe what we told him of these horrors. The German people did not know they existed, he assured us. No one ever saw the concentration camps or the slave workers in the underground factories. No one ever knew that Greeks and French and Norwegians and Czechs and Russians and Poles and Jews were exterminated. "We didn't know."

And it became apparent that in his small-town cocoon he really didn't know. Sensing that he had made a point, the little watchmaker resumed his smile, and went over to the attack. "Why do you Americans come here to fight us?" he said. "We have no quarrel with you."

We blinked. He repeated the remark. We tried to remind him of the slogan, "Today Europe, tomorrow the world." He continued to smile affably. Ah, slogans—all that....

That was past. Now there was something more urgent. His daughters sparkled with pride as papa brought forth his final, incontrovertible observation. "You know what I think," he said, with his sly, intimate smile, "you know what I really believe?" He beamed ingratiatingly, as one who is about to utter the secret binding password. "America is bound to fight Russia. Pretty soon. Tell me, isn't that so?"

His smile embraced us now as allies. His wife nodded, smiling

again as though all her worries were over—her husband had, infallibly, provided. He had known the key.

Yes, their last weapon was working. From the general of the infantry to the little small-town watchmaker, they were using it.

We went into Leipzig the next morning. The last resistance had just been overcome, in the huge Denkmal, the vast monument to the last war that stood in the center of the city. Some GI's told us that a cameraman, trying to get a shot of the SS holding out in the Denkmal, had been picked off there in the street.

We entered the Denkmal, threading our way between the piles of cases of sausages and bread, stacked up for a long siege. On a stone bench we saw the naked body of a man. We studied him for a long while. There was not a mark of identity on him. We were fairly certain this was the photographer who had been killed. We were fairly certain it was Gaston Modru, the French cameraman whom we had met that night after the press camp had retired from Spa. But so strange is the person of a human being naked in death that we did not feel we could identify him for certain. Lying there in the enemy's memorial to the other war, he was the universal unknown soldier.

And in Leipzig where the fresh offering, the witness to war, lay in the Denkmal, the universal question of the future was in every face, on every pair of lips—the Russians or the Americans? The inhabitants seemed to know that their city was on the borderline between east and west, and they seemed hourly to be waiting for the Russians to arrive and take over from the Americans, and to be hoping that at that very moment the struggle between the allies would begin.

The universal question was echoed to me in strange form in a labor camp at the outskirts of the city, where I found a few Jews. A boy of seventeen asked if he could talk with me about his personal problem. He had an extraordinarily large, long head, with deep eye-pouches, and a drawn face, not altogether from hunger, but from self-torment.

His future, he said, depended on the correct solution of his problem. With survivors, the future was even more grave a stake



than with the ordinary person, for, as I have tried to explain, each felt that he had been miraculously spared for some great purpose, and that he bore the responsibility of finding and accomplishing his mission. This boy felt that he had found his mission. He was certain that he carried within him a genius for chemistry. Now he had to find means for instruction and for work.

His tension was thus comprehensible : it was the ferment of a mind without matter to work upon, an acid eating its container. He was ready to digest calculus, and he didn't know geometry.

"Tell me," he begged anxiously, "which way should I go? with the Russians or the Americans?"

I was utterly startled. The choice had never been so bluntly laid before me. I had never considered that for us—and the survivors were part of us—there was a question of choice. And yet in that boy's single question in 1945 the world's dilemma could be measured. From within the concentration camp the boy had already recognized the divided world.

Now a few of his companions intervened. With a strange, almost pleased knowingness they asked about anti-Semitism in America. Wasn't it so that in Boston a synagogue had been besmirched? Wasn't it so that Jews were barred from the universities?

They listened to my explanations with knowing smiles. Yes, that's how it began with us, their smiles seemed to say. We too in those days said it would go no further. Wait, wait, the rest will come.

Then still others amongst them took up the dispute.—And in Russia was there no anti-Semitism? Of course anti-Semitism was illegal, but all the same were there any more brutal Jew-killers than the Ukrainians?

The boy stared from one group to the other, with his tragic sunken eyes. Suddenly he declared, almost in rage, "But I'm not interested in that. I want to know where a being has a chance to develop what is in him. On which side can I be sure that what is in me will not be lost? If I have a gift for chemistry—to which side should I go?"

He confronted me accusingly, as though I owed him an answer.

What could I say? Could I guarantee him this on our own side? He was so badly retarded, could I be certain he would find the opportunity to study? It could indeed happen, there would be

agencies to help out, but first would come the physical needs of the survivors, and time would pass, and blunders would be made, and people would be lost. It could indeed happen, the way was not closed, and with endless resolution he might arrive.

And on the other side? I could imagine only vaguely that since they were crazy for science they would have some means of selection so as not to lose the talented ones amongst the young. Probably once he was on the road, in a controlled state, they would foster what was in him. But if the first step were missed? He might spend his life in a coalmine.

I tried to explain to him the little I knew of the possibilities. So much depended on unpredictable factors. Of course he had known all this already, by himself. But like all tormented people, he had to hear the same things said by an outside voice.

I never knew what decision he made. But in the pure anguish of his question, it seemed to me that I recognized a Jewish preoccupation. Others too were faced by the question, but their responses were differently conditioned. The Germans were facing it directly. The German, General Roericht, even in the moment of his capitulation had spoken coldly, undoubtingly of the resumption of the struggle, for his mind was glacially fixed on the idea of world order, and he saw himself only as a machine-part in such an eventual mechanism. The Jew, in the moment of his liberation, was tormented with the wish to give himself into usefulness, to foster the talent that he believed to be invested in him, to bring it out for the common good. One could say that he was selfish, that he sought only self-development, and yet his fervid anxiety seemed to be based on the concern that his talent should eventually benefit society. Which way should he go? The whole world trembles still with his question, and trembles the more because of the Roerichts who had their own categorical answer; the world trembles not so much for the way they chose but for the reason of their choice.

The time came then for the meeting of the Russian and American armies. We faced each other across a space of fifteen or twenty miles on either side of the Elbe, just as though this area were a no-man's land. And days passed and weeks passed, and the juncture was not yet made. The tension mounted. The Germans were certain now, and by dint of hearing their story the American soldiers were widely convinced that when the forces came into contact there would be shooting, an incident, and the war would be on.



In the field the boys reported, "Yah we can hear them talking Russki on their intercom, we pick it up. They must be right near here somewhere."

The correspondents had all gravitated to the vicinity where the forces were closest to each other. We too were there, circling, watching for one unit or another to take the initiative and venture toward the Elbe.

One day as we drove through a side street we got into conversation with a captain who was assembling a number of armored vehicles. Lowering his voice he asked if we wanted to come along on a real show. "I've got orders to go ahead and keep going until I contact the Russians."

A halfdozen light tanks, several reconn cars, and a number of jeeps were in the lineup. One more jeep of correspondents had been tipped off—the *Stars and Stripes* and a *Newsweek* man.

We moved out, passed the last outposts, and entered a forest. Felled logs blocked the road, and we recalled our own roadblock at Bastogne, with the futile little mines behind the logs.

The tanks circumvented the logs, churning a path between the trees. After five or six roadblocks, the way was clear. Our little column moved cautiously through naked German territory, while the captain kept up a stream of talk with our base.

We were out of the forest, cutting through a farm area. The Germans watched us pass, scarcely surprised. In a hamlet, we asked if the Russians were anywhere near. The Germans shrugged. Of the Wehrmacht, there was no sign.

Presently we reached the Elbe. According to intelligence, the Russians were on the other side, to the north, at Torgau, some fifteen miles up the river. We turned up a riverside road and now as we moved we began to encounter flocks of refugees, women wheeling babycarriages filled with bundles, family groups pushing carts; here and there small groups of German soldiers appeared, to surrender.

Except that we were a tiny force, the excursion was like spearheading with the Fourth Armored Division. All around us the Germans were thinking only of fleeing the Russians; they

presumed we were the vanguard of the occupying force and welcomed us.

We reached a village facing a blown bridge; its halves protruded from the water, and soldiers, civilians, homeguard, all in an incredibly muddled panic, were scrambling across the girders. At the same time a number of people on our side, some Germans, some Polish laborers from the farms, were crossing over to the other side in little boats. The scene oddly resembled a magnetic field, with scraps of iron filings sorting themselves out, drawn to one pole or another.

These people too were facing the final question, hurrying to their places as the final line came down dividing the world.

One of our tanks had developed an oil leak, and the commander of the patrol decided to return to base. The next day a wandering jeep contacted the Russians, and a hundred correspondents piled over the Elbe for the official meeting at Torgau, and a Russian soldier demonstrating his automatic rifle to a GI shot a Russian officer, and we all took pictures of each other meeting the Russians.

Logically the war was over, but there were still large areas unliberated, and we would comb them to the end. The armies had not yet joined in Czecho-Slovakia, and it still could not be known into which sector Theresienstadt would fall.

* * *

Below Munich, then, we joined a column whose objective was Innsbruck. They would pass through the heart of the mystic area known as the redoubt, where the last of the SS, it was rumored, had stored arms for years to come in inaccessible caves and snowbound heights. To this area, high hostages, and even entire trainloads from the slave camps were being removed.

The road began to mount, we reached the snowline and were in the Tyrolean tourist land of peasants with feathers in their green hats, of embroidered clothing and embroidered cottages, of fretwork porches gaily painted, of village inns with outdoor



frescoes of religious scenes. This operetta setting was the last fortress.

We were a ways behind the column, on a winding mountain road, with nothing in sight but snow and frosted trees, and all before us misting into fog. A wind whipped up the snow, swirling it into the fog, and out of this frozen mist we saw two dark figures stumbling towards us. They came on, doubled over, swaying, wraithlike, and we recognized the shapes as human. An old coat held over the two of them billowed out behind.

We stopped. They were two men, starved, gaunt, with fever-glistening eyes, their feet wrapped in rags, their thin convict-striped pants blowing around their matchstick legs.

To me, they could only be Jews. Jews dragged to the ultimate lair by the unrelenting beast, prey dropped at the mouth of the last cave.

We spoke to them. They had come off a final, abandoned transport.

"Where are you from?"

"From? ...From Dachau."

"And before?"

One said, "From Vladimirova, in Czechin."

The other said, "From Besovitza, in Czechin... I have a relative in Brooklyn..."

"We have typhus," the first one said.

"Where are you going?"

"Where can a Jew go?"

We gave them chocolate.

I took their names.

Some twenty miles before Innsbruck, the regiment was stopped by a blownout section of road. At the brokenoff edge there was an exchange of fire with last-stand Nazis across the ravine. There were a few dead, some wounded. Bulldozers were shoving through a detour.

Hitler was dead and any day now any hour the whistle would blow. Why get killed in the last days of the war?

A tall, tough-talking colonel commanded the regiment. Innsbruck was his final objective and he was going to make it before the whistle blew. He wasn't stopping, except for night.

We were in the loft of a battered barn; part of a wall was knocked out, and we could see the smouldering buildings across the blownout road-gap. So this was the last-ditch holdout battle in the redoubt.

A little Jewish doctor was with us in the colonel's headquarters in the loft. He was a battalion medic. We talked about after the war; he was interested in group medical practice, and I told him about my brother-in-law's group in Chicago, and how they had managed. He was a little Jewish doctor from the Bronx, that was all. We talked about the survivors; he had treated them whenever he got a chance on the road. "Some of the things they did to those people," he said. "I saw one man with a chunk cut out of his back, just a cube of flesh maybe two inches, he told me they were experimenting on him in a camp. A thing like that couldn't possibly serve any purpose," he concluded with a kind of clinical indignation.

The next day we were moving forward; I saw the little doctor a couple of times, along the road. The going was slow, for the road was mined at every turn. A pair of minesweepers walked along, and the column with all its vehicles and tanks and trucks and armored cars and caterpillar tracks and wheels crawled after the men at walking pace, as though in some ritual procession, with the ultimate representatives of civilization following a pair of primitive magicians, waving their wand over the road.

And sometimes the procession halted altogether while a few men carefully picked at the road, and scooped with their hands, and removed the deadly planted mines. And then we were going again, on a severe downslope, with a complete drop on the left, and an ascending mountain wall on the right, exactly like that time on the autobahn when the Fourth Armored had been ambushed.

But the colonel was doing his job according to regulations, he had a string of men combing through the wooded mountainside above the road, moving parallel with the column.

Then we heard a series of explosions, and terrible yells, aidman, aidman! and a jeep pulled up and a couple of aidmen started up the hill, and we heard another explosion.

—Footmines. Must be footmines all in through there. The kind you never can see. The kind that tears your nuts off.

Oh watch yourselves, it's the last day, today or tomorrow the



war will be over, watch yourselves, don't get hurt, don't get killed.

A team of mine detectors started laboriously, cautiously, making their way up the steep wet slope, laying a tape as they checked a clear path. Then after them went a pair of aidmen, with their stretcher between them, clambering one step at a time, carefully trying not to diverge an inch from the taped path, jeezus to risk anything when the war is over, everybody knows its over, why the sonofabitch do they still have to put the mines, why the sonofabitch can't we sit still today, and tomorrow the whistle will blow—

—More men, they yelled from above. More help, to evacuate. A hell of a mess up there.

Several of us started up the slope, gingerly keeping to the tapes, like trying to walk a wireline up a slippery hill. Because the footmines could be anywhere, a hairsbreadth out of line and you got it.

There was a Catholic chaplain just before me, and ahead of him was the little Jewish doctor. It wasn't his business to be there either, he should have been back at the aid station.

We got to them; a man lay with half his thigh pulped, and an aidman leaned grotesquely against a tree, fearful of moving, his foot and leg bloodied and pieces torn from his cheek; a third wounded man lay half-placed on the stretcher, his pants were all blood.

"Careful, look before you make a step, careful," somebody was entreating, over and over. "Watch yourself, watch yourself, it's full of footmines, the dirty sonsabitches."

Somehow four of us got around the stretcher; the doctor was on my left. He stooped and rolled the wounded man so he was entirely on the stretcher, then all of us, with strange uneven motions as we bent while trying to keep our feet from budging, stooped to lift the stretcher, and one man lost his balance and staggered back one step, and the whole group blew up. The stretcher fell from our hands and the wounded man rolled down the hill and as he rolled blew still another mine, and that finished him, he lay half wrapped around the base of a tree.

The little doctor had been hit full face by the explosion that made us drop the stretcher, and he collapsed there. I had recoiled a few steps automatically but luckily had not set off anything, and I stood in a frozen pose repeating hysterically, "Don't move,

don't move, don't anyone move," and I was afraid to raise my arms to feel myself to check if I wasn't torn. Then I made one step to reach the tape, and with my feet on the tape I leaned over to reach the doctor. The priest and I tried to take the doctor between us, to help him down; one man in front, one behind, we tried to stick to the tape-line, halfsliding him down. The incline was slippery; I felt his body sliding out of my hands and yelled to the priest, "Hold, hold!" I knew I couldn't do any more, I was no damn use. Just then some more GI's came up along the tape and they took over our burden.

I got down the rest of the way somehow; the priest was standing in the road, his face bloody; there were several small holes in his cheeks from bits of shrapnel. Somebody said my face was bloody too; I noticed then that my leg hurt, but pulling up my pants found I had only a couple of concussion wounds on the inside of the thigh; I had been the luckiest.

The doctor lay on the road, beside the aid jeep. Blood was welling up and bubbling out of his mouth; his breath rattled. He was conscious until they loaded him onto the jeep; he died on the way to the aid station.

Three more men died there.

Toward the end of the afternoon we were in the outskirts of Innsbruck and a car came out to meet us, and a breathless youngster identified himself as from the OSS, one of the refugee boys parachuted to work in his home town. Yes, the Austrian underground had taken Innsbruck, it was in their hands, they were awaiting us.

The colonel marshalled the tanks and the reconn cars and waved his long arms yelling everybody up on the cars! and the GI's loaded up on the armor. More, more, he yelled, until the armored vehicles were covered with men—a real entry in style, to the last objective. And thus we rolled into the city, at the furthest limit of the last hideout area, within touching distance of Italy; we had combed the redoubt.

The next day the army from Italy met ours in the Brenner Pass, and all around from the mountain fastnesses the world's big men were brought into the light, the political leaders, the hostages, the scientists hidden away to perfect the last secret



weapon in the ultimate moment, the supreme commanders of one side and the other, Blum, Weygand, Reynaud, General Bors, Goring, Jouhaux, Gamelin. We followed a tank across the drawbridge of a castle, while SS in the valley below fired their last cannon at its towers, and in the castle a huddle of little elderly men whose names on one side or the other were the symbol of the conflict opened their arms to their deliverers and the weary GI's climbed out of the tank and found things to eat in the kitchen, and said, "Who are all these old geezers anyway?"

In an upstairs room lay the body of the commander of Buchenwald, who had driven to this redoubt where the highest political prisoners were confined, and with him was a coffer filled with jewels and gold rings and gold teeth, and he had put a bullet through his mouth the night before.

There was no more place for the war to go, except in the little contracting area in the center of Czecho-Slovakia, containing Prague and Theresienstadt.

Col. Abrams and his men were on the edge of that area, and Erik and I drove there. We found the colonel at rest in his polished and shining commandpost in a schoolhouse on the Czech border. "Jesus," he said, "Why don't they let me roll into Prague. We could be there in two hours, we could relieve the town by tonight," for the Germans were still holding Prague and killing men who were trying to liberate the city.

But there was a line limiting our penetration, and his tanks could not go beyond that line.

Then there was still a war in Prague; and like drunkards who cannot leave off while there is a drink left in the bottle, we drove around to Pilsen where another armored division sat aching to move toward Prague. "It's only sixty miles," they said, "and a good straight road." The two of us started out on the road. For about ten miles there were still GI outposts, and then there were only Czech villages with festoons across the road and men jumping onto trucks going off to liberate Prague. We rolled along, in each village we asked whether it was safe to proceed further, and in each we were told that the road was clear until the next village, but after that the Germans had it.

Presently we came to a barricade, and it was the edge of the

city where the tramlines ended. We drove up on the sidewalk and identified ourselves to a civilian with an armband and a tommygun. He jumped onto the jeep, sitting astride the hood yelling, "America! America!" as he directed us into the city.

There were three barricades at least to every block, some made of heaped furniture and junk, some neatly built of stone and bricks, some made of smashed cars and even an airplane wing. People sat quietly on the barricades, but beyond, in the center of the city, shells were falling.

We wound around the barricades, squeezing the jeep along sidewalks and through alleys, and at last came to the river. Across the river we could now see a few buildings afire. That was in the old city, our guide said. The Germans were occupying the government buildings and shelling the old city, which the liberators were trying to capture. We drove over the bridge. Except for the small area on our left, where the fighting was taking place, the city was intact.

We passed a house and saw a homemade American flag in a secondfloor window. We stopped, and Erik went up and asked for the flag. The woman gave it to him, embracing him and weeping, and we flew it from the jeep, and people ran alongside us in the street crying in broken English, "Where are the tanks? the tanks are coming behind you?" And we couldn't explain that our tanks were bound by a line, while they were fighting without equipment.

We reached the very center of the city, and in front of a modern office building stood two tiny armored cars. In the basement was the headquarters of the liberation army.

We got down into the basement and talked to some officers who were frantic around a map, while others answered telephones, seven more men lost in the workers quarters, the shelling continuing, the old city hall in flames; they explained their situation to us, naming streets and quarters of the city with which we were of course totally unfamiliar. "We can hold," they said, "but send us your tanks, why can't your tanks come?"

"They want to come," we said, "but they aren't allowed."

Then we went out to see the fighting. A truck was standing across-street from headquarters, and the word Films was scrawled on it. A redheaded young man, standing by the truck, began to talk in pidgin English, explaining this was a resistance film unit;



he would show us where the action was taking place. He led us around a corner onto the wide main street, the Vaslavska—on the left side, a few blocks up, was a cinema, and on the corner was a cigarstore with the windows blown out, and from just inside the store we could glance down another street and see the flaming section a block away. The street was in the line of fire.

We lay on the sidewalk there while Erik took some pictures and we said to each other, The war is over and we are still getting shot at, what the hell's the matter with us?

We pulled ourselves out of there and returned toward headquarters.

The best we could do was get back to Pilsen and tell how the people of Prague were begging for our tanks. But before going I said to our redheaded guide, "Listen, I am especially interested in the fate of the Jews, for Prague was an ancient Jewish center. Do you know if any Jews survived? Are there many left in the city?"

He looked at me queerly. "Not many," he said. Then he broke into a grin. "You are talking to one." He showed me his false identity papers.

"Well, you've got your Jew story," Erik said. "Let's get the hell out."

It was impossible to try for Theresienstadt, as the Germans still blocked the way on that side of the city. We drove back to Pilsen.

The next day the Russians came into Prague. So for the Czechs the great question was settled. They'd go to the side that sent the tanks.

It was clear now that Theresienstadt was to fall into the Russian zone. Several correspondents had been arrested by the Russians, trying to get to Berlin, but others had got through their zone without trouble.

The next morning we drove to Karlsbad, where the last American sentry stood. The ceasefire was for midnight. We tanked up with gas, made sure of our spare tires, and told the sentry we were just going to take a look around Karlsbad. Then we took

the road to Theresienstadt, which was about thirty miles inside the Russian lines.

* * *

During many weeks before the end of the war we had seen people on the roads: the liberated slaves undertaking the long journey home to France, the liberated prisoners of war, a ragged and yet cheerful human flood surging across Germany. They were on every road, walking, pushing their few belongings in gocarts, lugging their wrecks of suitcases, their packs swollen with a little retribution collected from German households—clothes, an ornamental clock, "souvenirs"—and they were always quick to explain their meagre loot with a catalogue of entire households of possessions, lifelong savings taken from them by the enemy. It was little enough to take back.

But most of them walked barren, too weak to carry or push even a little retribution, having only a small bundle with a change of clothing, a bit of food, a camping pot. Everything that could roll was employed, baby carriages, carts, bicycles with innumerable attachments; the most astute had managed somehow to secure horses and wagons, and the really able had sometimes managed as much as a motorcycle, had even organized a car, and these vehicles would be overflowing with jubilant ex-slaves, scrounging gas all along the way home.

We had sometimes made a K-ration meal in their roadside camps, we had heard a few wild and ugly stories of pillage and rape; Poles, it was said, were the most savagely vengeful, and the German villagers cowered. But all this had seemed a normal complement of war, and the day-after-day movement had driven us mostly to reflect upon the vastly underestimated extent of refashioning that Hitler had attempted in Europe: how all these individuals had been carried off from their home places, and how terribly powerful was the spring that Hitler had bent, the spring that in the end had to snap out of his grasp and swing them back home. This had seemed in a way a demonstration of man's impotence to alter nature, for here was the end of the effort, with the



pieces all restoring themselves to their natural starting position. To me, this had a remote, an archaic meaning, for over an infinitely longer arc, wasn't this the springing force that sent us back to Palestine?

But now, beyond Karlsbad, we encountered a spectacle that surpassed anything we had seen in the war, a flight so elemental and overwhelming as to wipe out any emotion we had for or against the German people, leaving us stupefied.

The roads were filled as thickly as downtown city streets when work lets out. But with the massiveness of the movement the resemblance ended. For otherwise there was resemblance to nothing we had known.

The entire population east of Karlsbad seemed to be fleeing with only one objective—to get into the American zone before the separation line was closed. Neither Erik nor I had any political interpretation for this flight. We know now that what we saw was the fulfillment of the movement ordered by the German leaders in the twenty-four hours of grace maneuvered at the surrender conference.

Compared to the people in this flight, the refugees we had seen on the roads of Germany were happy bohemian strollers. We saw now an epic movement, a massive entanglement of humanity, at once gigantic and grotesque, pitiful and deserved. In the flood floated formations beyond the most nightmarish imagining.

An ancient locomotive tractor, burning a poisonous fuel that choked the roads, churned at a walking pace, and attached to it by cords, wires, poles, hooks, was an assortment of twenty or thirty vehicles, like a snapdragon line of ragged, lame and starved beggars, mechanical and animal, clinging onto one another, drawn by a wounded blind dinosaur. There was a high farm buggy, with bundles tied to its shafts, and women and babies and wounded soldiers crammed in its riding space, and then came a brokendown Opel car containing an officer and his family buried under suitcases and bundles and haversacks, the car hitched to the buggy by frayed ropes, and linked to the car was a farmwagon loaded with old women and bawling children, and walking around and behind the wagon, clutching it, were half-grown boys and peasant

women and city women and a farmer with white mustaches, in leather jacket and boots, then came a chassis of some sort of iron-wheeled vehicle, and then more carriages, broken Volkswagons, ox-carts, farm wagons, to end up with a tail of barrows and gocarts, the whole moving as slowly as the slowest walker that jammed the road.

Then would come a wave of people with sacks, bundles, people leaning on sticks and crutches, and then another chain of vehicles drawn by a steamroller, and another chain attached to a sputtering truck, with a man lying across the open hood holding together a defective part of the motor.

Against this we progressed in our jeep, providing the only movement in the opposite direction. Part of the time we were on the road with the stream flowing around us, part of the time we had a wheel in the ditch.

As we progressed, the procession increased in unreality. Now we came upon an entire hospital of wounded German soldiers evacuating itself onto the road. Men with heads and limbs swathed in bandages, men carrying plaster-encased arms before them, and even men with plaster-cased legs hobbling on improvised crutches.

And along in this very witch's dream of war there would sometimes appear a fast-moving vehicle, a German car still in operation, filled with French or American prisoners of war just liberated by the Russian advance. They would tell of having taken their vehicle from some German officer and his family, kicked out and left walking on the road. There were also groups of liberated prisoners and liberated slaves on foot, mingled with the Germans on the road, and they could not but recognize the final justice that had caught up with their enemies, here.

There was no mood nor was there energy for recrimination. Only at one moment we became involved in an incident that might have ended disastrously. Our jeep, pressing through the sluggish multitude, jammed against a German motorcyclist who was maneuvering through the crowd. He leaped off his wheel, sputtering profanity. He was a black-uniformed SS, blind with the rage of defeat, and doubly embittered through physical exhaustion. Now Erik leaped from our car, shrieking curses at the German. The SS man reached for his revolver. We were alone in the flood of Germans.



At that moment, in the dense crowd, I caught sight of a German officer. "Command your man to surrender his weapon!" I shouted. "That's in the armistice." I pulled at Erik, for he too was reaching for his pistol.

The officer seized the SS man's arm, took his revolver from him, and handed it to me. I pulled Erik into the jeep and drove on as quickly as possible. Erik, examining the SS man's weapon, let out a final curse. It was an American Colt. Probably captured in the Bulge.

Somehow we progressed through that phantasm. One after another came the chains of vehicles, a garishly painted circus truck, and then the carts and wagons and bicycles and gocarts loaded with bedding and household articles, and the people walking doubled under three, four rucksacks, with suitcases in their hands, and in the midst of the whole, as in some symbolic tapestry, there suddenly appeared a pair of faultlessly attired riders on beautiful saddle-horses, floating above the women with babies, the hospital evacuees, the fringe of exhausted older people sitting by the roadside, the campfires, the ex-prisoners, the wounded. Mile after mile, there was no end of them.

What did they fear? The Russians. The Russians.

From French and American liberated prisoners who surrounded our jeep in moments when it was jammed in the crowd, we heard snatches of stories. The Russkis really gave it to the Jerries. The first few days after the Russkis came into a town, their troops operated unrestrained. You could believe anything. After that, they came under discipline and the raping and murder was halted and order was established.

—They give them just what they deserve for a couple of days, our men said soberly. Serves them right.

And then we came to the Russians. As we entered a town we saw numbers of horsedrawn carts. This was their basic transportation, these horsecarts had carried the Russian Army's munitions and supplies halfway across Europe.

Their troops were deploying to occupy the town, and our glimpse of them was like a glimpse of any army anywhere, busy with its own movements, the vehicles grouped, the men in

bunches together; there were no screaming civilians, there was no wild shooting such as one might have imagined from the tales we had heard. The stream of civilians continued amongst and between the Russian vehicles and under the very feet of their horses, and the Russians seemed totally unconcerned with them.

We were halfway to Theresienstadt.

Now the road was clear of civilians, though there were still some groups walking through the fields, and there were numbers of released prisoners heading westward. But the road itself was filled with Russian army vehicles in a variety and disorder almost equal to what we had just been through. There were trucks, jeeps, German civilian cars, tanks, halftracks, guns pulled by horses, and the inevitable horsedrawn supply wagons, all in a series of traffic knots. We could not help but recall the pure pattern of movement of the Fourth Armored Division, and the amazing orderliness of the vast traffic movement around the Bulge.

In this one glimpse we felt we understood the whole Russian way, their victory through an overwhelming waste of energy, of men, of everything.

Some of the captured German cars had stalled and were entangled in a web of other vehicles, with Russian officers and men cursing and kicking at them, while others laboriously pushed and half carried their wagons, cars, and trucks across a ditch onto a detour.

We scraped and twisted, picking a way between the vehicles, sometimes virtually crawling under them, sometimes finding a sideroad free from traffic for a space, then running into the Russians again. As we progressed we called out continuously, Tovarisch Americanski, Franzoski, and the Russians replied with grins and sometimes a word or two. When we got stuck we handed out cigarettes. Once when we were stalled in a traffic jam an officer approached and asked for our papers—Papiern, papiern. We produced our credentials, pointing to our photographs, and he was satisfied.

And thus, in mid-afternoon, we arrived at a roadsign: Teresin. Theresienstadt.

The camp was not difficult to find, for the town itself was the camp. It was a village surrounded by a high red brick wall, with



a gate opening onto the main road. Large placards read: Typhus. We drove in.

We had heard that Theresienstadt was not like other camps; it had been a Czech village, and the Germans had permitted the Jewish community of Czecho-Slovakia to purchase this village and turn it into a concentration camp for themselves. Within the camp, the Jews were supposed to administer their community, even printing a form of money. The camp had been reserved for German, Austrian, and Czech Jews—the "better" Jews.

Instead of wooden barracks, they were housed in the old town buildings which had been turned into tenements subdivided into minute one-room and half-room apartments. There were institutional buildings, there was a hospital and there was even a small park.

We sought out the administration building. Within a moment the word "American" had gone through the entire camp, and our jeep was surrounded, almost lifted off the ground. Erik stood in the seat, calling out, asking of the crowd, calling his mother's name. Did anyone know her? Was she still in Theresienstadt? Was she alive?

He described her, a small old woman, very frail, from Berlin, a woman nearing sixty. People in the crowd repeated her name, questioningly. No, no one knew her.

"Wait, Erik, there must be an index of some kind here. Let's ask in the administration," I said. I pushed my way into the building. Erik remained in the crowd.

Upstairs there was an office, quite normal-looking with a railing and desks and filing cabinets. A weary young woman welcomed me, explaining that the Russians had passed the day before, liberating the camp, but had put no one in authority, and consequently there was utter anarchy, the food stores had been broken open, no further source of supply was established, no one knew what to do. She would assemble a committee of camp leaders to speak with me, to send a message to the outer world. Meanwhile she would show me the camp.

As for my friend's mother—the camp records had been removed, hidden, to prevent their being destroyed. It would take some time to get at them.

We went out. Erik was no longer by the jeep; he had gone off searching. But a crowd was examining the jeep, poring over

the names written on the metal all around, and a young woman rushed toward me, "Please! oh, where was this name written? can you tell me where it was written?" She pulled me to the jeep, pointing to a name scrawled on the hood, scarcely decipherable in the tangle of other names. "It's my husband's signature!" she cried. "He was taken from here in a labor transport seven months ago. He's alive!"

I didn't know where the name had been written. Perhaps in Dachau. But it was enough. Her husband was alive; some day they would find each other.

Now we began to visit Theresienstadt. Though this was the best—if one can use such a word—of the concentration camps, it was nevertheless a place of death; no children were permitted to be born; the community was there to die. Periodically there were levies of men and women for the slave camps. The remainder passed through their days on a starvation diet, counting out their last trinkets in trades to the guards for additional food. My guide told me how her own baby had died. She had come to the camp with her husband and their little girl, a year old. She had brought no clothes for herself, only this dress she wore, in order to bring all of her baby's things, and her baby had become the idol of the camp. "I kept her always in white. I washed her clothes incessantly, bargained away everything I had so that I might keep her as well as though we were outside. Can you understand? It seemed to me that if I succeeded in this one thing, in keeping my baby properly, it would be the symbol for everything. Oh, in this whole dreary camp, she was the liveliest, the prettiest thing, so fresh, so white, so dainty, through her we knew we were still human beings."

And then? After some months the baby had begun to weaken for lack of fresh food. It sickened and died.

The mother looked at me, with blank uncomprehension still in her, and I saw that she was half mad from the experience. She hadn't been able to save her child, nobody had been able to save the child in this place. And somehow her tragedy seemed more terrible than that of the mothers who went into the gas-chambers with their babies clutched to their breasts.

This was the "soft" concentration camp, a slow distillation



of death, yet after all for some thirty thousand it had meant survival. But nothing was unpaid for in Europe, and their survival contained a final diabolism. For these inhabitants of Theresienstadt survived through considering themselves superior to the verminous "eastern Jews" who had been exterminated in the slave camps and the crematoria.

Again it may be felt that such things as I have to tell here should be kept "amongst ourselves" in the Jewish world. But this is more than a book about the Jews; it seeks to touch the human spirit, and my Jewish experience is the probe. Therefore I must relate that when I came into Theresienstadt I found a ghetto within a ghetto.

For in the center of this little walled village there were two buildings, guarded, their windows covered with barbed wire to prevent escape. Inside those buildings were the Jews who had arrived in the last weeks from Buchenwald and Dachau, the Jews who had survived the last trip in locked evacuation trains.

The Nazis, in a final act of cynicism, had shipped them here. The trains had arrived, such trains as I had seen at the gates of Dachau—boxcars bedded several deep with the corpses of those who had died en route, and the survivors on top of them. The survivors were typhus ridden and a danger to the clean community of Theresienstadt, that was true. They were therefore herded into two hastily vacated barracks and segregated there behind barbed wire.

Walking into those barracks was like walking again through lower Buchenwald. The survivors lay on the bare floors, or limped half dead through the sloshy filthy corridors. There were a few common washrooms with troughs along the walls, and an inadequate dribble of water that nevertheless was not drained off, and on the floors of those washrooms they had retched out the last of their sick insides.

As I passed through the dim crowded little rooms some of the survivors, still conscious enough to realize that an American had appeared, seized me, screaming, "Look what they have done with us! our own Jews! They are treating us worse than the Germans did in Buchenwald!" A skeletal wraith lying on the floor grasped my feet and gasped at me, "I have typhus! There is no doctor, there is no one for us!"

There were women also in this heap of filth, all were mingled

together; in the hallway a young girl passed me, a dark little girl of perhaps seventeen with huge supernatural black eyes and an ineffable beauty that I have never since been able to forget. She was carrying water to someone, in a tin can.

We came out of that depth of hell, and my guide led me to the Theresienstadt hospital. It was quiet, clean, excellently equipped, for the able practitioners of Prague and Vienna and Berlin had been permitted to bring their instruments and part of their medical machinery here, and the hospital was of course staffed with some of the finest physicians and surgeons of three countries. There were vacant beds in every ward.

We emerged into the courtyard, and just then a wagon drove through an archway: it carried the daily ration of bread. A husky young woman stood on the wagon to carry out the distribution, but she was helpless. The vehicle was instantly mobbed, and from all corners the mob increased; we were caught in it as the ravenous survivors, oblivious of the shrieks of women trampled upon, or of cries from the camp police for order, unheeding to any appeal or command, raged and tore at each other to reach the wagon. We fought our way backward to get out of the crowd, and managed to escape up a stairway. The wagon was already empty.

The soup distribution, my guide told me, was still managed with some degree of control, but since there was no assurance of further supplies the inmates were frantic with fear. The "east Jews" had broken into the potato cellars and cleaned them out.

We returned toward the administration building. Erik yelled to me from the jeep.

In the front seat sat a frail white-haired woman with a white nursecap on her head. He had found his mother.

Later, he told me how it had been. He had remembered the postcard received by his mother's friend in Bonn, long ago, one of the rare cards which each resident of Theresienstadt was permitted to send out. Thereon, Erik's mother had mentioned that she was helping take care of the camp orphans. And so Erik had sought out the children's quarters. He had opened the door and seen her sitting there in the room where a few



children were at play. And she had raised her eyes and seen him and repeated his name, uncertain but that what she saw was a hallucination.

Her belongings, in a tiny bundle, lay in her lap.

And so we had finished the war. We made the drive back in the dark. Once, we were challenged by Russian guards on the road. They studied our identity papers. Something troubled them. Through their broken German, and sign language, we managed to comprehend. They took us for liberated American prisoners, that was understandable. But where had we acquired this jeep? Surely the Germans had not permitted us to take a jeep to prison and keep it all this time?

Finally one of them, studying the vehicle, came to the conclusion that it was a Russian Army jeep given to us by one of their own officers, for our ride home, because we were individuals of great importance. We decided this was a good explanation and said "Yah, yah, tak tak!"

As for the little white-haired woman in the nursecap, no one paid any attention.

In a village on the other side of Karlsbad we located a regimental headquarters, and were allotted two rooms in a requisitioned German house. In the pantry we found plates and tableware. We cooked up some rations and served an army supper to Erik's mother.

The woman sat before the table, dazed, touching every utensil. She touched the plate, the linen, naming each article as though to convince herself that these things were real, that there was a world where they still existed.

Then when she saw her room, an entire room to herself, a bed with linen and a pillow, she began slowly to cry. For as a lone old woman she had not been able to struggle for the little that was to be had in Theresienstadt, and by degrees she had been relegated downward in the scale of life there. She had had no corner of her own, had slept in a common room with tiers of bunks, had forgotten what it could be like to possess the slightest privacy.

Erik plunged through the house, ransacked a closet, dragged an armful of women's dresses, coats, shoes into the little bedroom. His mother shook her head.

"But at least take one dress!" he insisted. "You are in rags! They took everything of yours!"

The feeble little woman still shook her head, and her will was the more powerful. "I don't want anything of anyone's," she said.

Erik dropped the stuff, defeated.

And then, dimly, I began to understand my bond to Erik during these last weeks. I had been with someone who was acting out my own problem; his violence grew out of his inner conflict, which was like mine, only more powerful. There was a self-hatred somehow identified with his parents and with Jewishness, a resentment and at the same time love. I recalled how once in a sarcastic mood he had dropped a word about having himself at some period before the war, joined a Zionist youth group for a while. So he too had sought for a simpler way to be a Jew, and not found it. And in him too there was a deep resentment toward those who had brought him into the world, because of all the ills he had found in life, and like the rest of us he put all this upon his Jewishness, with which they had innocently burdened him, and perhaps in his case there were the additional conflicts between French and German loyalties in the way of his mother's life.

But the greatest compulsion of all was the common one, the Torah's behest of honoring the parents, common to all people, and whether or not through Jewish identification or through natural love, this had held him. Now in this last incident there was involved another echo of our deepest folk-teaching. Thou shalt not covet. And as his mother, with a firmness which in her enfeebled condition could be seen to represent the very essence of herself, rejected the possessions of others, there was in Erik's comprehension of her gesture a final and peaceful recognition; he had found his mother; she was still the source of knowing what was right and what was wrong; she was a Jewish woman, still.

We spoke of none of this. But in that house, that night, in



the person of that frail small woman, I knew that the greatest survival strength was in human ethics.

In the press camp, they were used to our returning with surprises from our sorties, for we were known as the task force. There had been the Mercedes of the captured general, and such items as Hitler's globe. But our arrival with Erik's mother provided a climax of which we ourselves had scarcely dared dream. While we rested there, she was the queen of the camp.

There could be peace.

* * *

Then I started out by myself for a last look around Germany. And on this journey two incidents befell which seemed to bracket between them the full range of meaning of my war experience, for evil and for good.

The great surge of population had ended as the barriers were established between the Russian and the American zones. But not far from Karlsbad I began to pass small groups of women on the road. These were German women. I thought of taking one with me.

This was the last, unfulfilled impulse of war, still active in me. For in war there is a reversal of the general code of the community of men. It is right to kill, and with this sanction comes a compulsion to reverse all the other civilized injunctions: to steal, lie, blaspheme, and rape.

In modern war an attempt is made within the armies to control and regulate the release of these impulses, to continue the observance of some of the peace-time injunctions, while others are being violated on command. This creates a conflict in the soldier—and many minor escapes are found to relieve his conflict. Thus, theft is transformed into loot; rape, in Germany, was accomplished through the medium of a bar of chocolate, and was known as fraternization.

For in a parallel way on the loser's side, particularly with the

Germans who had been bred to a code of savage morality, there was a preacceptance of the code of war that brought theft and violation with defeat. To pay, in this way, was indeed a kind of vindication of the very morality under which they had lived and fought and worshipped.

The women, then, were waiting to be taken by the victors. But this very willingness to be violated frustrated the victorious soldier's rage for vengeful release of all his guilts, and therefore every man in the area felt within himself a kind of approbation for the tales of genuine rape. Yes, he understood, even understood the legends of Russian brutality; though he outwardly expressed abhorrence, he inwardly felt that's right, let the Russkis give it to them! And every man wondered in himself whether he could do such a thing.

We were no different from the others. Erik had infinitely greater motivation for revenge; my own bitterness was general—a bitterness for what the Germans had done to my people; Erik's was personal, for what they had done to himself and his family. Thus, there was a kind of game of dare that Erik and I carried on through the last weeks, wondering whether we could find ourselves in this further experience.

Like all men, we wondered about ourselves—how far could we go, in war? of what were we capable?

In the soldiers there was a hatred bred of resentment at being dragged from home, turned into killing brutes, forced through discomfort and fear and loneliness to hate the bloody enemy that had brought all this upon a man. Added to this was the undeniable "lust of conquest". Some explained it in a bitter rationalization, as they walked into the German homes in the smallest villages and beheld the comfort and wealth of life possessed by the enemy. Why, the standard of comfort in a German village seemed beyond that in an American town. Why, any house you bust into had closets crammed with linen and good clothes, the loot of Europe, and gadgets, electric blankets, excellent radios, heaters, irons, eiderdowns, silverware, all the comforts.—These people weren't hurting for nothing, said the Southern boy, what did they have to go and bring us into a war for? They had plenty, they had a good life. And the soldier's incensement flared, for way back in every soldier's mind had been the confrontation that comes in any fight: maybe the



enemy has a reason for his quarrel? With the constant self-identification with the enemy that takes place in warfare—old Jerry is sitting there watching me just like I'm sitting here watching him—the soldier himself begins to build a possible alibi for his opponent; thus, there had been the wonder whether it wasn't true, what Hitler said about how they had no room to live in their country and therefore had to go out and beat some living space out of the world. The slum boys, the sharecroppers, they all could feel for such an argument. But now they saw there was plenty in the German's land, and their anger increased—drag us into a war when they had no excuse for it! they weren't hurting for anything!

Partly this was exorcised in looting.

But looting had another meaning, the ancient meaning of all war, the taking of the enemy into and upon oneself, the devouring of the enemy so that one might have his strength, and the symbolic way of devouring the enemy was through the fetish—carrying his weapons, wearing his scalp, taking his women. All this was a way of obliterating the enemy and at the same time absorbing his power, his strength.

Therefore the GI had to come into the possession of a German pistol, for that was the highest fetish, just as the German had to acquire an American gun, and the GI said the Luger was better than the Colt, and the German said the Colt was superior to the Luger. The GI had to wear a German sheepskin coat as a trophy of war, like wearing the very skin of the enemy, and captured German wurst was for the same reason superior to any American ration. German helmets, swords, and daggers were among the classic fetishes, and in German homes we rooted about for souvenirs of a personal nature.

Certainly there were some in whom this concomitant of war became a sickness for things of value; once, entering a town beyond the Rhine, I heard a jeweller protesting that a soldier had come into his shop and gone as by habit to the safe in the rear of the store and forced him to open it, taking his stock of jewels and gold. But again and again I had been with GI's as they rooted through houses which had just been vacated, and I had rooted with them through drawers and bureaus, passing by silverware and valuables; what we were looking for we hardly knew—trinkets, something odd, old postcards, "souve-

nirs"—fetiches, like the time in Stolberg when I had taken a handful of death announcements.

The time we entered Gotha, Erik and I had gone straight for the leading photo shop and kicked in the doors. There was nothing in the shop. Actually we were looking for film negative, as we had run out. But another correspondent who was behind us had taken occasion to write an indignant moralizing piece about looting in the army, without naming us he described the incident of kicking in the door of the photo shop as plain thievery. We laughed then, and what we sensed was that such a man had no call to be near the war, nor to be interpreting the war to people at home whose sons were at the front, for he was planting misunderstanding. He should have known how to write and explain to the people back home that this form of excess had to be, that it was a release against the uglier things in war.

In this war two items attained the highest fetish value—guns and cameras. Perhaps in an unconscious way the army channelized looting into a pursuit of these obtainable items. For there was an order that Germans had to surrender all firearms and optical items—spyglasses, cameras—the instant a town was taken.

When the going was easy this regulation became almost a game; in one village I saw the lead tank stationed in the town square while a line of civilians formed, surrendering their cameras, guns, and opera glasses as though this were the primary object of the war, and the GI's were solemnly handing out chits for these items. One lad who knew cameras pounced on a Contax.

Certainly Erik and I shared in this; we had become known as "operators", and every time we left the press camp for the front we would be given a list of souvenirs to bring back for everyone from the dispatcher to the camp commander. We finally worked out the problem according to rank: you couldn't give anything less than a No. 3 Contax to the top, and then the souvenirs graded down through No. 2 Contax, Leica, Rolleiflex, Rolleicord, and the minor brands. When we travelled with a division we supplied practically the entire staff with their souvenirs because they were too busy to pick them up. We passed out our Lugers and Mausers, and ended the war with



one of each weapon (mine were confiscated by the customs authorities in New York) and with a camera apiece.

Had the looting fever not been channelled into a quest for guns and cameras, it would certainly have expressed itself in other values; as it was, this comparatively innocent regulation solved the matter.

From looting to rape is supposed to be no step at all in war, but as our army was fairly innocent in the first, it was outdone in the second by the lustful eagerness of the German girls to fulfill their roles as conquered women. Yet stories were told; and sometimes the hatred in a man rose so high that he felt the absolute need of violence.

Twice, Erik and I had been in times of bitterness on the road, times like after the pit at Ohrdruff or after talking to the mealy-mouthed watchmaker near Leipzig, when we would come away swearing the only thing to do was to throw them down, tear them apart.

Thus, the game began. In the long drives we would half-seriously set forth to each other the ideal conditions for such a scene of violence. There would have to be a wooded stretch of road, little traffic, and a lone girl on foot or on a bicycle.

The ideal situation never seemed to occur, for if we saw the girl, then a convoy was just passing, and if the girl was indeed alone, then there was no cover nearby, and once when all the factors came together, the girl, woods, isolation, we decided after coasting slowly alongside and prospecting our intended victim that she was altogether too ugly, and zoomed on, leaving her walking in peace.

Once we went a degree further. It was during the period when we were trying to meet the Russian forces. We made a tentative sally by ourselves one day, travelling several miles into the blank territory between the two armies.

There were the conditions, all fulfilled. Woods, solitude, we were even in an area where no one could control our actions. A girl appeared, riding a bicycle. When she saw the jeep she stopped and asked us if she could pass through to the town behind us, as she wanted to rejoin her mother.

The girl was young, good looking, and sullen. We recognized that the time had come. Her presence was a definitive challenge.

"Where are your papers?" Erik angrily roared. "You are trying to carry through a message!"

She repeated her story, a little anxiously. She was beginning to show her fright. This was in a sense exciting, and yet within ourselves we began to feel entirely false. We struggled with the moment. It was a sunny day, clear, warm. We told ourselves that it was because we really couldn't waste time fooling around when we were on edge for the biggest story of the war, the meeting with the Russians. All we did was to roar at her to get the hell back where she came from. She mounted her bike, turned, and wheeled off.

When we drove away we could scarcely look at each other. The tension had been terrible. We realized we simply hadn't been able to do it. It wasn't in us.

Yet I believe each of us must still have wondered whether it wasn't the presence of the other that had held him back, close friends though we were. The most brutal release, in war, was in the tales of mass rape, of throwing a girl onto the street and having a whole company line up on her; such tales as every country told of its enemy: the French had recited them of the Germans, and now the Germans recited them of the Russians, and sometimes of our boys too.

But what if a man were alone and there was nothing to prevent him?

This was what tormented me on my final journey, this last vestige of "knowing" war. As I went past the little groups of women with their baby-carriages full of belongings, their rucksacks, I slowed down, and finally I noticed one who was resting by a fence, by herself. I coasted to a stop. She was slender, lithe, with a small head and straight, light-blonde hair—quite typical of their ideal woman. I motioned to her to get in. She picked up her rucksack and hobbled toward the jeep. I noticed then that she had a bandage around her ankle.

As we drove off, I saw some women a small distance away smiling, laughing.

I asked her where she was going.

—Home, she said, "Heim ans Reich!" With a glance at me, at once defiant and perverse.

And where was home?

The real country—west Prussia. "We are Junkers," she said



with the same side-glance of provocative perversity. "The real article."

Her father had been a forester in peacetime, she said; in war he had been a colonel commanding a prisoncamp. He had died recently, at the age of sixty-one. She drew out a snapshot. "Look at him! a soldier! a strong beautiful figure of a man!"

He was straight and pin-perfect in his decoration-laden dress uniform. Yes, she was of the very breed—the same breed as our captured General Roericht, of the Prussians, the source of the general staff, of the "continuity" that was still to continue, of the idea of final overall conquest.

As for herself, she had been engaged to an officer who had been killed early in the war in Norway. And her brother had been killed at the front only two months ago, leaving a wife, a three-year-old, and a new-born baby. And just after the news of her brother's death, this girl, and her mother, and her sister-in-law with the babies had been bombed out of their home in west Prussia. In the evacuation they had all been separated; she had found herself in Karlsbad.

"First, I am going to bring the family together again," she declared. Her widowed sister-in-law with the babies was in a town near Leipzig; she was headed there now. "It is I who will bring them all home!" Her mother would still have to be found. And then she would take them all home, heim ans Reich. She repeated the phrase with an inflection at once ironic and filled with longing.

"We'll work the land, on the farms," she said. "You'll see, we'll build again!" She gave me her sidelong look, teasing, hateful, daring, all in one glance. "While you're busy fighting the Russians, we'll build up!"

We were silent for a while. I looked at her bandaged ankle. Oh, a few weeks ago she had set off with some officers in a car, they had been from her own country—Prussians—and they had decided that everything was finished and they would head for home. But the car had overturned, and her ankle had been crushed. It was nearly mended now—she had walked eight miles on it this morning, and she would walk all the way to west Prussia if need be.

Back there in Karlsbad she had been teaching school. "I taught them well!" she declared. "The little ones—up to ten years old.

Oh, they won't forget what I taught them! That is the most important age. I taught them to be proud of their soldiers, the best soldiers in the world. Have you seen our black battalions, our SS—admit it, they are beautiful! admit it! They fought best, of all the armies, admit it!"

"They were tough soldiers," I said.

"Oh they were beautiful!" she cried exultantly, and suddenly I knew who she was—she was the Scarlett O'Hara of this war. "We're a fighting people!" she declared. "That you'll have to admit. Men, straight and strong! That's what they're like where I come from. And our children won't forget. Ah, you should have seen them, when the Russians marched into Karlsbad. One of my little boys, nine years old, walked right down the street beside them singing our song out loud!" She sang the words for me. "With banner carried high, I'll follow Hitler till I die..."

And did she still believe in Adolph Hitler?

"I'll always believe in Adolph Hitler!" she cried. "The others, they that surrounded him, they were traitors, they destroyed his ideal. But I will always believe in it!"

And what was Hitler's ideal?

Why, she said, it was the ideal of the good life for all mankind. Why, Hitler had given the German workers good homes, and plenty of everything, every worker had earned a good living and been able to go to the theater, to live in real comfort in a modern house, and this ideal Hitler wanted to spread to the entire world, for everybody!

I couldn't help myself. "For the inferior races too?" I said. "For the Jews?"

Oh, that. She shrugged. What did that matter, against the fate of Germany? ...And then she looked at me, and realized.

There was a forest on both sides of us. A little dirt road entered and lost itself in the woods. I slowed the car. She followed my glance, and suddenly caught my arm. "No, no!" she cried.

It was her wounded ankle. I pictured myself having to lift her out of the car. That would be ridiculous. No, I couldn't do it when she was helpless. It had to be against a violently resisting bitch.

And on another level, the sprained ankle was the bitterest, the truest part of the symbol. This made me all the more angry with



her. I couldn't even make her get out of the car, and leave her alone in the road.

I drove on. We were silent.

Towards evening we were near Leipzig. I said I would stop for the night. I picked a gasthaus and went in and requisitioned a room.

When I came out, the girl was still in the car.

The woman who kept the gasthaus reacted with irritating warmth when she saw that the girl was hobbling. I wanted to declare that I hadn't picked up the bitch out of pity but to rape her.

There were two beds in the room, as though arranged by the Hays office. I gave the innkeeper some extra coffee, and she brought up butter and milk, bread and sausages. The girl gazed at the butter, tasted the real coffee. I saw then how thin she was. "Real butter," she said reverently. "Milk."

She ate, glancing at me with her earlier perversity. It said, I must prove to myself that I can do this, too. I must go through this last humiliation with one of our conquerors, even with a Jew. And I will go through with it, to prove that we are after all the stronger.

When I had opened my knapsack to get out the coffee, I had left out a souvenir SS dagger. The girl toyed with it. "Aren't you afraid I will cut your throat in the night?" she asked.

"Aren't you afraid I will put a bullet through your head?"

"We'll see which one wakes up alive!" She moved her injured leg carefully, as she got ready for bed. "You know, I can tell you, if there is ever a wiederstands bewegung, a resistance movement—and there is sure to be one—I'll be in it! I'll be the first one! I promise you!" And she looked at me with her mocking, provocative defiance, waiting.

* * *

In Leipzig I found one of my old familiar Third Army divisions, ensconced as an occupying force. There was a rabbi chaplain attached to this division; we talked for a while, mostly of the

future of surviving Jews. There was already a great pressure from some sections of American Jewry for the survivors to resettle in Europe. There were some who agreed with Mr. Bevin that it would even be fitting for Jewish brains and talent to be devoted to the rebuilding of a new Germany. These were of course political ideas from outside, and many non-Jews found a logic in them. Here in Leipzig, for instance, had been the world's greatest fur-processing center, a Jewish industry, like the diamond industry of Antwerp. The fur trade had been a bulwark of the city's economy. Would Jews gravitate to Leipzig again, would those few who had escaped to South America and Canada now return to re-establish their family enterprises? Would the survivors of Europe try to settle here again?

We had seen them and we couldn't imagine this happening. And yet, what could one know of the human spirit? Perhaps the suggestion was more than a political one offered by the British to turn Jews away from Palestine, perhaps there were still bits of roots that would take hold?

And suddenly Chaplain Lefkowitz asked me whether I was going through Cologne on my trip? I said I could go back to Paris through Cologne as well as any other way. In that case, he had a favor to ask of me. Like myself, he had been in Cologne on the day of its capture, he had found a Jewish survivor, and the man had directed the rabbi to the ruins of a synagogue, explaining that the congregation, years before, had buried their Torah beneath the floor.

With the aid of a few GI's the rabbi had excavated the Torah. "I asked the survivor if he wanted me to reconsecrate it," Lefkowitz said, "but there weren't ten Jews left in Cologne to form a congregation. This one man didn't believe there would ever again be a Jewish community established in Cologne. He asked me to take their Torah with me, and I did. But I left him my APO address, so that if enough Jews came together in Cologne, and they wanted their Torah returned, he could write to me. Well, I have a letter from him. He asks for the Torah."

Would I carry it back to Cologne?

It was little enough to do. The Torah was in a wooden crate, the size of a child's coffin. I put it on my shoulder, carried it downstairs, and placed it in the back of my jeep.

Now there began a long ride which was in essence uneventful,



but which had for me a peculiar tension and intensity. Every simplest movement, every word that was uttered during that ride received a special signifiance because of the presence of the Torah in my jeep. It was as though eternal judgement rode along with me.

I did not drive directly to Cologne, having planned to circle first through Bergen Belsen and the Ruhr.

I set out from Leipzig, riding for the first time alone, without physical fear and without the pressure of time. I began to feel the Torah as my companion, feeling it meaningful that at the close of the war I was carrying the Torah through all this German country, over the battlefields and through the ruins, past the mass graves and through the concentration camps.

As I rode in the spring through the soft-rolling countryside, watching the stooped rows of planters in their eternal attitudes in the fields, legends of our Torah returned to me. I remembered a tale of the Torah as the bride, in the life of Sabbatai Zvi, the imperfect messiah of Salonika, and how he had held his marriage feast amongst his ecstatic followers, clasping the silk-clad scroll to his heart, becoming wedded to the Torah. And I remembered the tales of the Jews in the time of the Crusades, when the pious scourge had passed through this very countryside, through Worms, Frankfort, Cologne, and when in many a Jewish community the pillaging crusaders had wrenched the Torah from the synagogue arc, flinging it into a fire made of Jewish holy books, and I remembered how a holy rabbi had leaped into the flames, to be consumed with his Torah as with a beloved bride.

And as I drove through that smiling and evil land I asked myself, what was the Torah, literally, and what was the Torah to me?

I asked myself, was it because we attempted to plant the Torah in strange lands that persecutions arose? Had we endeavored to bring others to recognize our Torah? No, we had not proseletyzed, we had indeed wished only to keep our bride undefiled in our own house. Others had sought her, had indeed made images of her, and having their own images, had sought to destroy the real.

The Torah, literally, I knew to be a parchment scroll upon which a portion of our law was inscribed, by hand, under certain conditions of purification with which I was unfamiliar but which

were ritual. Certainly there was beautiful care in the ritual of the Torah scribe, in purifying baths before his labor, and there were innumerable interdictions and specifications for making sure that quill and parchment were undefiled. And what was copied into the Torah? The laws of Moses, as printed in any Bible.

Then I reflected upon the mystification that the world had attached to this document. The ritual evolved by the Jews around a written parchment had been interpreted by some as sorcery, by some as mystical power, and Jews had been slain for the "secrets" of their sacred Torah, yet there were no secrets ever, the Torah was known and open to the world in every printed Testament.

Even in our modern world there remained something of mystery and interdiction in the idea of the Scroll of the Law for most non-Jews and probably for the greatest number of Jews. Though they knew the same words in the printed English or French or German Bible, even our "enlightened" Jews stood before the scroll inscribed in Hebrew and accepted it as something different, accepted it for its value as a talisman, rather than for a repetition of the code. We regarded the Torah indeed as we regarded a beautiful woman, endowing her with mystery, and in our trance of love forgetting that she was a changeable human being.

It was simple enough to understand that in the beginning when the law of Moses had first been promulgated, the wise and powerful leaders of the community, in order to secure obedience to the laws, had imputed them to supernatural powers: they were written by God, and given to Moses in thunder and lightning on a mountaintop. But rational Jewry had known now for centuries that the true purpose of the laws had been the establishment of a community, that men might learn how to live together.

The laws were a code of moral behavior, and physical behavior. They were the fundamental regulations for the conduct of life in a group society; they contained measures for public health and public safety as well as for family relationships.

Our Torah then was a governmental code employing the strongest known motive, the religious motive, as sanction. From the beginning its aim was to regulate the life of men in a community, toward justice and peace. When we worshipped the Torah



we worshipped the idea of law itself, the idea of a covenant among men that they might live together.

And this, as I drove alone with the Torah toward Bergen Belsen to pick up a last list of survivors, this seemed to me the strength and essence of all Judaism. In this had been our tenacity. Our highest belief, our God, was law—the universal common good. Perhaps the specific regulations that had been promulgated were sometimes unjust, and soon anachronistic. But the structure of our community permitted great latitude, and infinite change through the interpretations of the law.

It was as I drove through the ruins of Essen, past the wreckage of massive steel mills, where the largest cannon in the world had been forged, that I recalled a holiday known as Simchas Torah, the joy of Torah. I recalled an evening many years before, in the depression days in New York, when Leo Schwartz and I had wandered in Delancey Street looking for a little backyard synagogue where the "real Chassidim" still attained to ecstasy, and I remembered how we had climbed an ashcan to peer through the breath-steamed windows of a crowded little house of worship, where the old men, each with a Torah hugged to his breast, circled chanting and dancing, their heads thrown back, their eyes half closed in love.

What did they love? The godly idea of law, the miracle of law, of agreement between men. For through law man practiced the control of passions and emotions, through law he became a creative being rather than an animal. The idea of law transcended all the laws. In the end we had no dogma, no hierarchy. The single concept of law was our revelation and our holiness, the concept of an ever-evolving ever-appearing law whose end was justice.

This was my companion in the jeep, the Torah, an ever-maturing woman, ever-young as mankind is young.

I thought indeed of specific regulations. The myriad of anachronistic behests and restrictions, the milk and the flesh, the eating of the cloven hooved, the ablutions, the periods of purification, all these were local and temporary matters that could be set aside as nearly all of us had indeed set them aside. But what of the great moral behests? What of the commandments? For it was a generally accepted idea even in the modern world that

the ten commandments were a sufficient basic code for human behavior.

I wondered if I could recall the commandments, whether or not in their order. And if I could not, a shorter concept had been provided by the teacher Hillel, and repeated by the teacher Christ, for any man who wished to learn all scripture in a single breath. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The great rabbi had offered this in itself as a sign that the law was no system of minute observations, but an ethical attitude for life on earth between human beings.

And the commandments? I seemed to be prompted by a slender, agreeable voice that was there, riding with me, a young mother and teacher prompting her child.

I am the Lord Jehovah, thou shalt have no other God before me.

I did not believe in a personalized God named Jehovah, but believed in the universal immanence, and believed that no other faith had developed further than that of my own people in their slowly evolving comprehension of the universe.

In this war I had not killed, but given the imperfection of human society I had felt no final moral restraint against killing; I had stolen a little, coveted, committed adultery, and yet I had no bad conscience for these things. I took such interdictions as regulations toward whose observance a man should aspire, in the company of all society, and I took it that he should not separate himself from human society for observance alone.

I remembered Erik's mother, and how she would not take the smallest thing that belonged to another; indeed there were people who attained a greater degree of perfection. But the thundered precepts were not of equal weight, and I sought among them for the most useful guidance in the complex life of men when theft, adultery, and even killing were sometimes a required defense of life itself.

There were commandments against the making of graven images, against the worshipping of idols, and these were interdictions of another time that could have only symbolic meaning for us. And there was the commandment to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. I saw this for me not as a specific behest applied to a certain day of the week, but as the first effort to exert a kind of social justice in a group of men, to protect the laborer, even the beast in the field. Yet I recalled the observance



of the Sabbath day in Palestine as a historic reverence, a linking to our past, and I recalled through childhood a certain sweetness of the household in Sabbath, and I thought perhaps this observance is a good and wholesome thing, and that if I ever attained a domestic life somewhere I should like to keep the Sabbath as a symbol of this kind.

There was the commandment to honor one's father and mother; and I thought at first perhaps it was meant to enforce tribal authority in the society of those times, for why should so natural a response require a behest from on high? And then I recalled the general who had so strangely died, and I knew that the fullest meaning of the commandment was still needed in our day. It was perhaps this commandment that had led me in all my own search. For our father and mother meant our people, and to honor them meant to recognize and acknowledge them with grace. This simplest, most primitive knowledge was sometimes difficult to keep. We were born with it, but it could easily leave us. Entire generations could lose it. We could come to be ashamed of the names we carried, the names of our fathers, we could come to hide our identities and suppress every sign of ourselves—or we could stand in the world as what we were.

I had at last realized the distortion in the American-born Jews of my generation, that rose from the intimidation that their immigrant parents felt in the face of American life. The parents did not dare assert their Jewish culture before their children, whose avidity for American culture was so natural and powerful. This, coupled with all the factors that made some people ashamed of being Jews, tended to give the immigrant parents a sense of inferiority before their own children; it was indeed they who had failed to carry on to us the commandment to honor our forebears, to honor, to acknowledge, to accept, and I had been in my own way recovering my link with my historic past, and restoring this element to its proportionate place in my life. For it was my own wonder at the sometimes shame in me at being Jewish that had forced me to seek my sources in all their dignity. And this was the essence of the behest to honor one's forebears: it was a behest of unashamedness, of self-esteem for all mankind, through esteem for one's own particular sources.

There was one more commandment that remained to me. Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Murder, theft, adultery, false worship, lack of love or respect for one's parents—all these were torments of an individual nature, even though they were crimes against other people too. But the bearing of false witness, the lie, was the crime against the very basis of society, for men could never construct a way of living together unless there was some single plane in which they were in agreed communication. This was truth.

I looked about me in the broken and flattened city of Essen, where the inhabitants lived in the portions of cellars that had not been filled with the rubble of their collapsed homes. They too had erected a system of society, and in their system whatever served the goal of domination had been acceptable. The other people of the world had tried to deal with them and had failed because there had been no way of communication. There had been no truth, and all had pitifully collapsed.

I remembered my reading of *The Education of Henry Adams,* and how the most painful and astonishing discovery that he had made, in learning the ways of men, was that even in the high realms of diplomacy where men spoke for nations, one to the other, there could be lies.

And this was the result.

How could we ever understand each other, hope to learn to live together?

This then was my inmost behest. This was Torah for me.

When men consented to live by mutually found laws, ever-changing as society changed or perfected itself, then Torah would be fulfilled. But each man finds one word, one virtue that leads into the interlinked labyrinth of virtues; some would declare that if none coveted, there would be no crime, no murder, no denial of parents, no denial of God; some would declare that if none murdered, in the minutest sense including all forms of destruction, then we could attain a workable society, and so for each of the commandments.

In Rabbi Nachman's marvellous tale of the Seven Beggars, each carried a symbolic virtue in the form of a deformity, one was deaf, one blind, one lame, one hunchbacked, and for each deformity there was a compensating gift of insight, by which each followed a different secret road to the heart of the universe.

My own virtue-deformation was the commandment of truth, the commandment against bearing false witness, and it was not



an accident that this was the commandment that dealt with my creativity in the world. For as a writer, reporter, journalist—in all my work I was a witness. This was the injunction that had ruled me since childhood, a virtue in itself, and yet a deformity, for the practice of absolute truth must be crippling in an imperfect world.

Of all the commandments, I felt this to be the only one that was eternally applicable in the same form in which it had been issued. For me, this was the essence of our faith.

I recognized too that this was the imperative of science. In my own way of writing and living there had to be a kinship to the abstract view of the scientist who seeks to discover and record truth, even though he cannot yet sense its connection to larger truth, its application in life, its meaning. In all human intercourse, it seemed to me, there was security only in this adherence to truth, blind as it sometimes had to be.

* * *

Thus I arrived in Cologne. The city had been under occupation for some months, and there was now a good deal of civilian movement; many of the streets that had been blocked by rubble were now open, and I drove into one of these where I had had to clamber over ruins on the day Cologne was taken. The Jew whom Rabbi Lefkowitz had found lived in this street. I knew him, for I too had found him on that day of liberation, as there had been a little sign on his door: Jewish House. He had believed that from that day forward such a sign would prove helpful to him, rather than a mark of death.

Nearly every other house on the street had been destroyed by bombing, and in the first day of liberation the Jew of Cologne had pointed out to me that his house was the only one intact, a miracle, one of the miracles in his survival. He was a young man, married to a German woman, and therefore he had been on the delayed list for deportation; in the end even his turn had come, and he had saved himself by vanishing in the countryside, returning to his home only on the day of our entry into the city.

The sign Jewish House was no longer on his door.

"No," he told me. "I took it off. They were throwing stones at the house."

He came along to guide me to the place where the Torah was to be received. While we drove through Cologne, he told me how it was with him. Before the war he had owned a truck, and now he was trying to repair it so that he could work again at hauling. A few parts were needed, and he had to secure requisitions for these parts, and he had also to secure a license to operate his truck.

"Do you think things are any different?" he said. "Who are the clerks in all the offices where I have to get my license and my requisitions? The clerks are all the same ones. They see a Jewish name. I wait, and wait. I get put off, and get refused, while I see others securing what they need. I go to your occupation officials. They are tired already of hearing of Jewish troubles."

We reached the edge of town; in the fringe of half-bombed streets some habitations stood intact. We passed through the archway of what had been a Jewish old people's home; most of one building remained.

Two other members of the congregation were there, supervising a few workmen who were trying to patch together a broken room. The military government, they said, had restored this building to the Jewish community of Cologne.

I carried the Torah from the jeep, and they showed me a newly completed room in which they planned to arrange their little house of prayer.

I remembered the discussion in Leipzig, with chaplain Lefkowitz, about the return of the remnants, and the re-establishment of Jewish communities in Europe. Cologne had been one of the very oldest, one of the greatest and most fruitful of Jewish centers in Germany.

"How many of you are there now?" I asked.

"Perhaps twenty," one of them replied. People came, he said, to see whether anything remained of their lives here, perhaps to put in claims for destroyed property, and then they left.

I recalled how in the first days of the taking of the city I had found a GI, a German refugee who had been raised in Cologne, and I had gone with him to the ruin of the house where his



family had lived. In the cellar, under the debris of the possessions of a German family that had since occupied the house, we had come upon a broken chest of drawers filled with relics of his own family. Letters from his aunt to his father, old birthday greetings, even a Hebrew prayerbook that he had received on his Bar Mitzva, his thirteenth birthday, and finally a small brass menorah that I thought he would surely want to keep for remembrance. "No, no, I don't want any of it," he had said. "You keep it."

Now the Jews of Cologne took the Torah from my hands. Yes, I knew I could go away and write a hopeful story, a symbolic story of the return of the Torah to the most ancient of Jewish communities, of the indestructibility of the Jewish community, of how it would rise here again. But the truth was only desolation, the truth was only a handful of dazed survivors, each seeking a way to leave Germany, and this Torah they had wanted was wanted not to root them here, but to keep their faith in themselves alive, to remind them of their identity, for otherwise the world was unendurable.

No, I had to write of the Jews of Cologne, of the Jews of Europe as they were : broken, finished. It was not for me to bear false witness.

I had seen in Germany the same death that had been dealt long long ago to us in Spain, and I knew that in every one of us there is an obstinate hope that perhaps in spite of all, our people could live anywhere, could go back and live even in the places of death. It was a hope born of the fearful accusation of the survivors, those in the camps who had pointed to us in our uniforms, and said, Wait, wait, you too will know, you already have anti-Semitism in America, and one day you will know all that we know. And so there was in us a chill fear that this that we saw was an historic fate that followed us from one country to another, perhaps from continent to continent. And against this we pitted all of our rational understanding of the ideas that moved the world. America was the antithesis of all this that had been sickness in Europe, America was in itself a unity of nations, a country where different peoples had learned to live together. America would never bring us to this.

I had done with the story of the Jews of Europe.

I could go home.

PART THREE

# ISRAEL : The Released

BUT I had not done. When I reached New York, I soon realized that the world outside Europe had little comprehension of the extent of the tragedy that had taken place nor of the tragedy that remained.

I tried to write about it in the magazines. For to me the tragedy was the obstinacy of the world in the face of the material littleness of the problem. What was left was so inconsiderable, in numbers—a half-million or so broken and lonesome souls, in Europe. Population shifts of many times that number were being carried out quietly and efficiently. In a determined program, they could all have been introduced into Palestine within the space of a year; the situation could have been handled without violence. This seemed the least recompense that the world could offer to a people who had lost six millions, a small people whose losses even when taken numerically equalled those of the great powers. And taken proportionately, no other people's suffering could remotely compare with that of the Jews in the war.

But already the bitterest denouement was discernable. Around the Palestine question all the old arguments were being mouthed, the arguments about the country having no room for "millions of Jews"—who no longer existed. Vague, high-sounding principles were being discussed instead of practical numbers. Minor issues were being made to seem world-shaking. A few square miles of desert were debated about for three years as though they formed the strategic heart of London.

The only survivors reaching Palestine were those coming by

illegal ships, just as in the Nazi days. I conceived the idea of filming the entire underground route from Poland to Palestine, so that the world might at least be able to see the reality, to see the poor thin remnant of survivors, and comprehend that they had to go to their own country, or also die.

Within a few days I had organized the film project; but at the same time Herbert Kline arrived from California, telling me that he had revived our old plan to make a film in Palestine, this time through the Jewish National Fund.

It seemed to me that a picture of the positive achievements in Palestine was just as important as the film of the underground route, and I couldn't bear the thought that after all my years of longing and planning, the first Palestine film would be made without my participation. At the same time, Jacob Landau of the Overseas News Agency called me: very serious trouble was expected with the British in Palestine, rising out of the immigration struggle. Would I go there?

Within a week I was in my war correspondent's uniform again. Kline was to join me later to make the Palestine film.

There was a strange premonitory happening on my flight to Palestine. I had flown many times and never experienced discomfort except for an occasional slight earpain during landings. This time, as we came down for a routine halt at the Tunis airfield, my ears hurt insupportably. None of the other passengers had an unusual reaction. The pain was so acute that I asked the stewardess whether there was a doctor at the airport. She said I would have to go into town—a half-hour's drive. If I did that, I would miss the flight, and have to wait for the next plane to Cairo.

I didn't like the thought of waiting. The Jewish story was exploding even outside of Palestine; there had been riots in Cairo the day before, Jews had been killed, shops and synagogues smashed. I couldn't lose a day in a stopover.

The pain continued, sharp, insistent. But the call came for passengers to mount, and I returned to the plane.

When I reached Cairo I learned that there had been a massacre in the Jewish quarter in Tunis, just when I had been at the airfield.

The town at the time was controlled by British military police. Yet in a way curiously resembling the Hebron massacre



of 1929, Arabs had suddenly invaded the ancient Jewish quarter, a community that had existed amongst them for centuries, and slaughtered the inhabitants.

It was a strange preliminary knife-whetting, a warning from the Mufti's cult in the Arab world, a reminder that there were a million Jews living in Moslem lands, and that these were now hostages. Pressure for a Jewish Palestine could bring about their murder.

The British in Cairo refused me permission to return to Tunisia to investigate the massacre, but I saw desecration enough in the Jewish quarter of Cairo itself. I talked to some of the younger Egyptian Jews.—What is there here for us? they said. In the face of the rising Egyptian nationalism, the ghetto was a cemetery.

The wealthy, conservative Jews, on the other hand, declared that the Jewish community wished only to be Egyptian, and blamed the young Zionists for provoking the Egyptians.

I went to see the trembling old chief rabbi. There had been pressure on him to publically denounce the idea of Palestine for the Jews. But he would never make such a denunciation, he vowed to me, never! His quavering old voice rose in passion.

As the haughty and harsh Egyptians stamped my passport, and I boarded a plane for Palestine, I felt indeed as though I were living through a time-coulisse as in the Joseph novels of Thomas Mann; for here was our people still in Egypt, strangers and unwanted, and yet the Egyptians would not let this people go.

That night I was in Tel Aviv. I hadn't arrived an hour too soon. The red-bereted British paratroopers were moving into the city. It was the war again, the barbed wire across the streets, the armored vehicles rolling slowly in formation past the silent populace, and distant short bursts of fire, like mocking applause.

The war was not over; to us, the British had replaced the Germans. And to the majority of the British soldiers, despite all our attempts at explanation, we were the blameful enemy—for this is the natural emotional response in war. Those against whom a soldier is commanded to point his gun are his enemies,

and he hates them, even if they are poor defenseless bastards, they're responsible for keeping him away from home and for making him violate certain decent instincts deep within himself. And then presently some of them find a means to return his fire. One of his comrades is hit—it might have been himself—and then the enemy is like any other mortal enemy. Shoot to kill the sonsofbitches.

All the British actions and Jewish counteractions have melted into a few spectacularly symbolic scenes. The pattern for more than a year was the same. A DP ship intercepted, and in revenge the Jewish attack upon a British coastal installation that had located the ship, and in retaliation, British searches for arms, mass arrests, men carted off to the concentration camps, and in retaliation, terrorist acts, a police station blown up, a train blown up, and in retaliation, roads closed, "mobs" shot at, people killed, and in retaliation, British soldiers ambushed...

To render a clear picture of the complex situation in Palestine to the outside world was virtually impossible. About all that could be absorbed by the average newspaper reader was the fact that there was trouble between the Jews and the British in Palestine, and sometimes this was confusedly translated into trouble between Jews and Arabs. Actually for two years after the war the attempts of the British-tolerated Mufti faction to tease and poke and push the Palestine Arabs into violence against the Jews were unsuccessful, and even after the British left Palestine it still remained for the Arabs outside Palestine to make war on the Jews, while the Arabs who lived in the country and who wanted to stay at peace were forced to flee from their villages by their own terrorists.

The task of informing the world public of the issues in Palestine was further complicated by the assortment of strange names that had to be assimilated. There was the Haganah, the Palmach, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi, also known as Etzel, and the Stern group, also known as Lechi.

The Haganah and Palmach were resistance groups; the Irgun—Etzel, and Stern—Lechi, were terrorist groups, yet terrorist and resistance actions were sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other, even though a basic principle might be involved. And more complicating was the powerful propaganda carried on by the terrorist groups, particularly in the United States—



propaganda so powerful as to give their activities an importance altogether out of relationship to reality.

So successful was their propaganda that even the word Irgun, which simply means organization, and which had originally been the byword in Palestine itself for "the organization"—the Haganah—gradually became accepted through outside newspaper use as the name of the terrorist group, the Irgun Tsvai Leumi, the National Military Organization.

For a long time, indeed, the Haganah and its allied striking force, the Palmach, worked in secrecy, shunning publicity. In America the noise-making Irgun Tsvai Leumi was permitted to give the impression that it alone opposed the British in Palestine, that it alone was conducting illegal immigration. It cannot be denied that the Irgunists were excellent self-advertisers. So effective was their publicity that even after the Haganah came out openly to acknowledge its immigration work, I noticed in a French newspaper an item that showed how difficult it is for the truth to become known, once a lie has started. The item appeared after the affair of the Exodus. The newspaper *Combat* published a little box of definitions to set its readers straight. The Haganah was credited with having brought about a dozen illegal ships to Palestine. And the Irgun was credited with six. In actual fact, Haganah had by that time brought forty ships across the Mediterranean, and the Irgun—one.

It was this sort of credit-taking that naturally enraged the Haganah and Palmach boys. In the end, when the state of Israel was proclaimed, the Irgunists, even after collecting a million dollars in America to influence the Israeli electorate of a half-million people, were able to secure only about ten percent of the votes. This gives some idea of the extent to which the Irgunists might have been considered as speaking for the Jews of Palestine.

The point is of vital and in a way of tragic importance, for their irresponsible assumption of spokesmanship was costly in a way that has not yet been measured. The Haganah, it will be remembered, was the general self-defense organization of the Jewish community, grown out of the need, from the very beginning, for protection against Arab marauders. Nearly every able-bodied man in Palestine, and most of the women, could be mustered for Haganah.

But as the Haganah was a homeguard type of organization, with the members assigned to defend their own localities, a need arose for a force which could be moved about and utilized wherever necessary. After the protracted Arab attacks of 1937-39 had been ended by Wingate's night squads, composed mostly of Jewish volunteers, a much-needed movable striking force came into being, called the Palmach. It was composed of the best youth of the land, many of them sabras, native-born, and many of them veterans of the night squads. They were indeed soldiers in a secret army, subject to instant call, to assignment anywhere.

Palmach units were stationed in isolated seashore settlements, with the task of landing immigrants from illegal vessels. Men of the Palmach were on the vessels. Palmach units provided security for the convoys of trucks that went out to establish colonies that had to be set up during a single night.

Though under separate command, the Palmach was linked with the Haganah. The differences between the two organizations were on a political level; the younger organization was further left in social concept.

The Irgun Tsvai Leumi had come into being as the paramilitary organization of the Revisionists, whose basic tenet was the inclusion of Trans-Jordan in eventually Jewish Palestine. The Stern group were irredentists, split from the Irgun; they were the followers of Abraham Stern, who had been assassinated in Tel Aviv by British police, and they were the first organization to embrace a completely terrorist program.

While the Haganah and the Palmach ranks formed a cross-section of the population, Irgunists and Sternists were drawn largely from the Arab-like Jews of Yemen and Morocco, from the extremely youthful section of the population, and latterly from embittered survivors who were veterans of European partisan armies.

The general feeling that the terrorists represented the Jews of Palestine was due largely to the efforts of Peter Bergson, a rabid revisionist. And Bergson's success as a publicist was certainly a reproach to the legitimate Zionist organizations, for they had left a vacuum which the extremists rapidly filled—with words.

It so happened that I had contact with the beginning of Bergson's activity in the United States. For shortly after



I arrived in New York to make documentary films for OWI, I received a call from a publicity man who wanted me to have lunch with a fellow from Palestine, named Bergson, who aimed to organize a campaign for the formation of a Jewish army. Thus the English would be compelled to permit the Jews to fight as a unit in the war.

Bergson proved to be a tense little man, almost excessively well controlled. As the luncheon wore on, I began to realize I was in the company of a fanatic.

I couldn't put my finger on anything wrong. His plan for pressure for a Jewish army was sound, I felt. Certainly we should fight as a unity instead of as part of a Palestine brigade, for otherwise the British would later pretend (as some tried to do) that the Arabs had been the bulwark of the Palestine force.

But as Bergson suggested future plans, I realized that he pursued the technique of drawing people in through a project on which there could be little disagreement, and then pushing them into more doubtful territory. His further plans included a Jewish state embracing Trans-Jordan, to be acquired by force if necessary, and there were undertones, suggestions of methods that I felt inadmissable.

Certainly the Zionists themselves should have been making the campaign for the Jewish army. They had left him a means of attracting followers.

Bergson showed me a copy of a first manifesto, to be published as a fullpage advertisement. This was the initiation of an attention-getting device which was in the coming few years to prove costly, wasteful, sometimes harmful, and effective chiefly for Bergson, Ben Hecht, and their notoriety-loving friends.

I was asked to attend a small meeting to plan a pageant for Madison Square Garden. The meeting was in Frances Gunther's apartment. She seemed wholly absorbed in this cause; I had never before known her to be actively interested in Palestine.

There were several more people from the writing and theatrical world. None of these people had previously, to my knowledge, been involved in the Palestine struggle. The only one of Bergson's early supporters whose name had been prominently connected with Palestine was Van Paassen, and his name soon

disappeared from the ranks. I always assumed that his defection was due to the fact that he really knew the Palestine story.

Most others, undoubtedly, were drawn by what was to them the new and spectacular idea that Jews would fight. The very fact that this was a new thought to them reflected on their characters as Jews, for they should have known that Jews had been fighting in the Zionist struggle throughout all of our time. They, more than any others, should have known because they were writers, artists, journalists, people whose function and duty it is to be aware of the formative forces in society, and to make others aware.

There was just as much onus on the side of the Zionist and Palestine organizations. The fact that some of the greatest and most prominent Jews in America, while possessed of a latent sympathy for the cause, had "never heard of Palestine" and had never been drawn into the struggle was evidence of the great failure of the Zionist movement to adjust itself to the modern community. In the United States it had worn old-country beard and boots. All the personalities whose names later adorned the Bergson committees could just as well have been assembled to aid Haganah, to aid central Zionist activity, had the leaders known how to speak to them.

As it was, the Bergson adherents, and through them the largest number of American Jews, received their formative view of the Palestine situation through a side window. They received the sort of distorted view that one might have of American ideas, for example, through reading only the speeches of Mr. Rankin.

Their activity was mobilized, vast funds were collected from them in the ensuing years, ostensibly for paying for "medical aid to Hebrew fighters", and they thought they were very wise in assuming that their funds were really paying for explosives; apparently their funds were paying for more fullpage advertisements in which Ben Hecht could exercise his love for bellicose phrase-making.

These very funds were by this same action diverted from channels through which they might have flowed to the organizations that were truly arming Israel for the coming war of survival, and to the people who were truly bringing shipfuls of immigrants and of fighters into the land.

Haganah's silence was partly due to a feeling that a contest



with the Irgun through fullpage advertisements would merely be a further waste of money. And partly due to a rigid policy of secrecy.

In the wake of the "big names" headed by Ben Hecht came all the joiners among artists and writers and politicians whose names are so easily secured for committees. The first consideration —as in the days of the committees to aid Spain— is whether the leading names are prominent enough to make high company. Then, of course, inclusion in the list means status and free advertising, so why not let one's name be used?

It is inconceivable that the hundreds of public figures who suddenly blossomed out as Bergson adherents included even a small percentage intimately enough acquainted with the complex politics of Palestine to have given their adherence on an informed basis.

For a year or so I watched this proliferation of committees without feeling that they were harmful. Indeed, during the first period, when Ben Hecht's pageant was produced in Madison Square Garden, I felt that this group was effectively stimulating the moribund Jewish spirit. I felt that since the Zionists were failing to awaken the American-born Jews, it might be just as well that the Revisionists were doing the job. The pageant itself was an exciting example of mass-agitation craftsmanship.

But soon the high-sounding committees with rather obscure purposes began to multiply. Liberation Committees and Resistance Committees. And they were always characterized by the word Hebrew. I felt they were addressing themselves to Jews who, even when they were ready to help their people's cause, didn't want to think of themselves as Jews.

My name had been kept on their mailing list, and I received much of their glib literature. In Palestine, I wondered whether any of the money collected in America was actually reaching the extremists. As far as I could learn from the Irgunists, no Bergson money reached them at that time, though in later statements financial help was acknowledged. Mostly, these groups financed themselves through donations, extortions, and robberies, on the theory that the end justified the means. The money sent in by people in America, in response to advertising appeals for funds to bring refugees to Palestine, to provide aid for

fighters, apparently served chiefly to run the propaganda organization.

Certainly some of the propaganda results achieved by the Bergson group were useful, certainly some of the acts of the terrorists were pardonable, and some even laudable. But no one any longer argues that bravery and daring are always self-justifying. And in the end, the Bergson-Hecht propaganda provided the greatest catch-phrase toward anti-Semitism since Hitler and Streicher. And the terrorist acts nearly lost us Palestine.

For it was in one of those fullpage ads, after a series of reprisals and counter-reprisals in Palestine, that Ben Hecht wrote that with every bombing and shooting of British soldiers, "the Jews of America make a little holiday in their hearts."

I don't believe that any single phrase was ever more harmful to the Jewish people. Hecht published the statement with the flourish of the prophet speaking for his people; he must have realized that the British would accept this phrase as the slogan of the Jewish people: he wanted it so. And in this sense the phrase amounted to race-slander with murderous results.

How could this man permit himself to speak for our people? I had read a book of his called "A Guide for the Bedevilled", supposedly dealing with the Jew's problem. There is no need to discuss this pretentious hodgepodge of muddled and incomplete thoughts: one remark in it was sufficiently illustrative. Through all of his early life, and through his years in Chicago as a newspaperman, Hecht stated, he had never personally encountered anti-Semitism.

As may be remembered, I first knew Ben Hecht in his newspaper days, and followed him on the *Chicago Daily News*. It is utterly inconceivable to me that a Chicago newspaperman with a name like Ben Hecht could have been unaware that anti-Semitism existed in America, and could have failed to encounter anti-Semitism at so ripe an age. To make such a statement in a book that was supposed to be a guide for other Jews revealed, to me, more than anything else in the volume, Hecht's capacity for attitudinizing and self-deception.

And since he had passed his early years in the self-conviction that there was no Jewish problem, his suddenly complete absorption in the Jewish cause was bound to result in distorted activity.

Certainly it was apparent that his facility for phrase-making



had seduced him into advertising his joy when Britons died. But other people paid with their lives for such parlor terrorism.

Probably Hecht thought he was echoing the brutal warriors and prophets of the early day of our people. But the return to our homeland is not intended to be an atavism. It is not a return to the sometimes primitive morality of our forefathers, whose bloodthirsty battlecries belonged to the state of society in their own time.

It is the very essence of the development of Judaism that Ben Hecht's line denied, for in living through every form of martyrdom and punishment we have refined our conceptions of human morality, we have realized that human evils must be fought, but in regret and sorrow rather than in the delight of brutal aggression.

Hecht does not know Palestine. I doubt if he has ever seen a dying British soldier. I helped a bullet-riddled Briton into an ambulance, one night of terror in Jerusalem, and it did not make my heart glad to see his death, nor did the death of any Briton bring gladness to the hearts of Palestinians I knew, except the very few who had been driven to moral sickness through terrorism. Indeed, even among the terrorists this was rare, for I recall a morning in Tel Aviv when I passed a British Army truck lying wrecked on Allenby Road, where it had been ambushed, overturned, and set on fire. As I stopped to photograph it, a teen-age girl, noticing my correspondent's uniform, ran up to me and exhorted me in school-learned English to "be sure to tell that we got the driver out before we put the truck on fire. We try to prevent human bloodshed." The girl was a "terrorist".

Hecht's remark, indeed, made me ashamed of the very function of writing.

And I believe it was a decisive item in turning the British public against us.

"Who cares?" the extremists said. "Better to know that they all hate us, that they are our enemies."

I happened to be among those who believed that this was neither just, nor wise. Every force counts: the force of British public opinion, quite sympathetic to us at the beginning of the conflict, could have saved Jewish as well as British lives. Even when some British soldiers were killed in terrorist actions, there

were English citizens who understood the unparalleled provocation that history—and the behavior of their own foreign minister—had put upon our people who became terrorists. But when Ben Hecht told them that we gloried in the death of their sons, then they could be with us no longer, and they were with Mr. Bevin.

It is interesting to recall the names of some of the immigrant ships that the Haganah brought to the shores of Palestine. They were named after Jewish heroes from all history, after the parachutists from Palestine who died while trying to organize Jewish resistance in Europe—Hannah Szenesch and Enzo Sereni and their comrades; they were named after the heroes of the Warsaw ghetto, and after men like Theodore Herzl, and after places like Yagur.

The Irgunists too had their heroes, their martyrs like Dov Gruner. But the one Irgun ship to cross the Mediterranean during the British occupation of Palestine was named the Ben Hecht.

When I reached Palestine in the beginning of the campaign of British repressions in 1946, one of the favorite tactics of the Irgun was to accuse the Haganah of "collaboration" with the British, for the Haganah had worked with the British forces during the war. Though this is history now, it is necessary to speak of it, for what happened during the period of resistance and terror against the British left character formations which will undoubtedly emerge in the future of Israel. The Haganah, at the very time of these accusations of collaboration, was expanding its illegal immigration program, sending emissaries all through Europe to organize the escape, training men to bring vessels across the sea, and fighting the British at every point where there was interference with immigration.

For the Haganah resistance was based on two cardinal points: the Haganah would fight for immigration, and the Haganah would fight against seizure of arms.

Thus, during the period of growing violence, actions could be identified as coming from the Haganah when either of these points were involved. If a radar station on Mount Carmel was blown up the day after an immigrant ship was caught, that was pretty surely a Haganah retaliation.



Acts of violence which were, however, disconnected acts of revenge or of plain terror were usually Irgun or Sternist acts. Sometimes, as the campaigns mounted, the distinction of "reasonable" from "unreasonable" acts became difficult.

There was for instance a Mobile Police Force, used by the British in special repressive measures. Many members of this force were Mosley followers who had enlisted for Palestine duty with particular delight, as they would be paid for beating up Jews. When the Sarona headquarters of this force was attacked, the operation could have come from any of the Irguns.

In a few instances, there were concerted actions on a large scale by two or even all three groups, as in the simultaneous sabotage of scores of railway points, one night, in retaliation for British searches for arms in the settlements.

The Haganah's adherence to a kind of ethics of resistance demanded, for instance, that all actions should be carried out with the minimum risk of loss of enemy life. Sometimes warnings were given even though the success of the action itself was endangered. Irgunists too followed this practice, but as the campaigns wore on their adherents became more revengeful and the discipline slackened.

Part of the Haganah's concern was to avoid the decay in the population's own standards of morality that would result from revengeful use of terror. Secondly, there was the feeling that as long as the meaning of every action was clear in the action itself, the enemy soldier would have to recognize that our fight was not wanton, and there would at least be a hope of confining the conflict and preventing the development of blind hatred in the British Army. This was psychological warfare, and it was proven sound by sympathetic reactions that came from many British soldiers, at least in the early stages of the conflict.

But when the Irgun and Sternist campaigns attained full violence, it was no longer possible to reach the mind of the average Briton, to make him realize that not every Jew in the community was ready to enter his tent and machinegun him if the sentry for one moment relaxed his vigilance.

It is difficult indeed to speak of restraints, of limitations to violence, of degrees of hatred in a situation such as existed in Palestine. As the pitiful remnants of Europe's Jewry were

brought to the shore, it was the very protector, the very nation whom all the nations of the world had entrusted with facilitating their entry, that barred the way, even to killing some who fought to reach their land.

And as the situation deteriorated, soldiers put to these bitter tasks became like soldiers anywhere: there were beatings and there were tortures. One could understand only too well what made some Jews of Palestine become terrorists.

* * *

The day after my arrival there was an absolute twenty-four-hour house curfew in Tel Aviv. Tanks patrolled the streets. A search for terrorists was supposed to be taking place.

In my correspondent's uniform I ventured out of the Gat Rimon Hotel and mingled with the Tommies, talking to them. It was sickening and enraging, how little they knew, how little they understood. Most of them were very young replacement troops, kids of eighteen and nineteen, and the older men were war weary, hating the idea that they might get hurt in this nasty Palestine mess after surviving the war, and therefore hating the Jews.

On Allenby Road, near the post office, the paratroopers had fired into a crowd, killing several. After the wounded had been taken away, I approached the street blockade where the soldiers were sitting by a machinegun amidst the debris of smashed shopwindows. Two Tommies were trying to explain the Jews to each other.

"It's because they want immigration," one said.

"Well, if they want immigration why don't they talk for it?" said the other.

How could one hope to explain to them?

It was on this day that I witnessed the strangest battle in all my experience. For as the day wore on, children began to wiggle out of the houses, first playing in their yards, then in little groups



in the streets. And soon these little groups were formed into a war-game against the British, a war-game such as kids play anywhere in the world—only here it was against real soldiers who had guns.

The children—the age of my own son—would drag out a few orange crates, broken bits of furniture, an old bedspring, and soon there would be a barricade across the street. Behind it the boys would stand, with their pieces of wood representing tommyguns, and eh-eh-eh-eh they would rattle, as they fired at the Tommies.

The British were there at the corner of Allenby Road, behind their own barricade—a barrel-roll of barbed wire, flung across the intersection. They would turn away from the taunting kids.

Emboldened, the children would climb over their own blockade, approach, and fling stones at the soldiers. The men yelled at them, menaced them with their guns, walked a few steps into the street to send the kids scurrying back behind their barricade. The soldiers were not too distant from childhood themselves, and some of them even rattled back at the kids, eh-eh-eh-eh. At the same moment the attack from the little boys was an affront to their status as men of His Majesty's Forces, risking their lives in the suppression of a colonial revolt, and so they would turn away again, and try to ignore the pests, and be men.

After a while the attack was repeated. This time the soldiers picked up the stones and heaved them back at the kids. Some of the Tommies got a little excited and charged down the street like a gang of older fellows unable to resist the game.

This went on for a time, and then the Tommies phoned their headquarters and with irritated embarrassment reported their trouble.

Presently two truckloads of reinforcements arrived. One of the trucks contained a platoon of the notorious Mobile Police. They wore helmets, carried shield and buckler and long clubs. On special occasions they were permitted to carry pistols, and many of them were muttering now—if they only had leave to use arms on the little Jew bastards.

They formed the first row, and directly behind them came two rows of troops with their tommyguns at the ready.

The children of Israel were agitated, jumping about behind their barricade in a kind of dance. Slowly, step by step, His

Majesty's Forces advanced down the street. And now the kids began to retreat, step for step with the soldiers. The men climbed over the barricade, still pressing back the enemy. All the way down the block the British Army conquered.

In the balcony windows and on the roofs of the houses along the street were the parents, the big and little brothers, the uncles, aunts, grandparents of the little boys, breathlessly watching the battle. A few mothers called to their boys to come inside; a British officer bawled up to the older people to get their brats off the street. One or two women tried to remonstrate, half jokingly, with the British.

The ranks of police and military had reached the end of the block. Kids vanished into doorways, into passages. I stood beside the commander of the operation as he reported back by walkie-talkie. "Shall we pursue them?" he asked rather eagerly.

The answer was an order to retire, since the field was clear.

The British forces returned up the block and took their positions at the corner.

Soon the kids began peering out of their hiding places, one by one, venturing out a step, gathering again.

A Tommy muttered to me, "I just wish we'd get the order to open up on them. Be easy to pick them off."

"But they're just children," I said.

"What's the difference?"

For a few moments the street was quiet. An armored reconnaissance car stood in Allenby Road; a British officer was settled in the open hatch, with fieldglasses to his eyes. He was looking down a slummy Yemenite sidestreet.

There too, kids were jumping and yelling. But in one or two doorways there were young men. As fast as one of these would expose himself, the officer would direct a sharpshooter to fire.

"Those are the leaders," the officer explained to me. "They're pushing the kids forward as a shield. We're picking off the leaders."

"Got that one!" I heard, and less than a hundred steps away a figure slid down in a doorway.

I crossed between the lines, in this strange battle, and reached



the doorway just as a first aidman came from a Star-of-David ambulance which I now noticed parked in another lane.

"They won't stay indoors," the ambulance man complained. "They come out to watch. They don't understand they'll be shot."

There was already one wounded man in the ambulance; he had a bullet in his groin. Now the load was complete and we drove to the hospital.

This "war" went on for several days. On the second day, I heard many tales of children being shot. Except for the shopping hour the British had forbidden Jews to emerge at all, and several children had been picked off when they slipped out onto their balconies.

I went to the hospital and there I saw these children—tots of eight, with bullets in them. They lay with open eyes, but all their reflections were inward. In each, the effort of the psyche seemed almost visible, in forms of hatred or of fear swelling within their torn souls, filling the jagged rents, these growths to remain in them forever.

Of some twenty bullet-wounded in the hospital, more than half were children under fourteen.

After I had sent out the story of the British battle against the children, I heard that even the Jewish newsmen in Jerusalem thought I had lost my head. I returned to the hospital and photographed the wounded children. Only then, the bitterest rage broke loose in the Palestine press. Other foreign correspondents told me that in the British public relations office I was now classified as enemy number one.

At that time captured illegal immigrants were not yet being taken to Cyprus, but were being confined in the Athlit detention camp on the coastal road near Haifa. With its guard-towers, searchlights, barbed wire, it could have been filmed and cut into a sequence about any concentration camp in Europe without the insertion being detected.

Then one day there was a mass escape from Athlit. The British furiously searched surrounding colonies but were unable to find the immigrants.

Shortly afterward I stopped at my old settlement, Yagur, on the other side of Mount Carmel from Athlit. And Bialystocker told me how the escape had been managed. I was walking with him toward one of the new children's houses as we talked, for he was going to fetch his little daughter to the medical cottage for an X-ray treatment of a minor skin ailment.

As for the affair at Athlit—he winked. It had come off well. A few men of Yagur had been permitted to enter the detention camp as Hebrew teachers for the immigrants. They had prepared the people for the break. On the appointed night, a Palmach squad had waited to lead the immigrants over Mount Carmel, and to cover the operation in case of a fight.

Everything had worked well except that a few of the immigrants, excited, had scattered and lost their way on the mountain. After an all-night hunt these stragglers had been rounded up and brought through the wady, back of Yagur. "You know the wady."

I knew it; many a Sabbath stroll I had taken there, years ago.

"The British came as far as the wady," he said. "We were all there waiting for them. They said they wanted to search Yagur. We told them they couldn't." His broad face showed only a flicker of proud amusement. "So they finally went away."

We had reached the children's house, and he pointed out the features of its design, the thoughtful arrangement of playrooms and diningroom so as to enable the fewest number of attendants to care for the children. His little girl came, hugging his leg, and as we walked with her toward the infirmary I asked if nothing further had happened, there in the affair of the wady.

"Oh, they sent some armored cars around, on the main road. They wanted to come in and make a real search."

By that time most of the escapees had been scattered in truckfuls to various settlements in the Emek. "As for the rest—how could they recognize them, mixed in among us?"

He showed me the infirmary, proudly pointing out the modern equipment. "We got some real fellows in that batch," he winked. "Partisans. One of them has the medal of a hero of the Soviet Union. They know a few tricks. Want to meet some of them?"

We went into the big dininghall for tea, and Bialystocker left me for a moment, returning with a businesslike fellow,



compact, knotted. He was the one who had the award. Oh, for a number of actions. One action was waylaying a convoy.

His words were separated, each as though aimed. In five or six words, the whole scene was before me. The captured Germans being walked away from their kraftwaggon.

Stupidly, I asked what had been done with the Germans.

The partisan's eyes rested on me for a moment, almost suspiciously. Bialystocker filled in the silence. There were real experts amongst the newcomers, he said. Especially for blowing up things—roads, railways.

I nodded. They were experts and there was need for them now, here in the homeland. The same crafts had to be practiced here, the crafts of the few against the many, the handful of dynamite, the bottle against the tank.

And bitterest of all was the realization that this was normal to these hard-knotted men, that they would never anywhere in their lives be surprised to find such a necessity. And if, and after we got rid of the British, what would come of their specialties then, of their compulsion to move in dark ways, to resist?

We went out, walking along a garden path, while the partisan told of his embarkation on an illegal ship, and how the British had caught it on the high seas.

On the porch of one of the cottages, several men were sitting. One of them was whittling a ship-model. I heard a snatch of their talk—the language was Italian. Bialystocker winked. "The crew. We got them out of Athlit, too. We're keeping them here until we can find a way to send them home."

A terrible impatience was in me to film such an illegal voyage. I hoped to be able to do it in a few months, after we had finished the Palestine film. I wondered if there would still be illegal ships, for President Truman had made his request that one hundred thousand Jews be permitted to enter Palestine.

Bialystocker and the partisan laughed. "Don't worry. There will still be ships for you to film."

* * *

One Saturday I was sitting in Jerusalem with a group of Palmach youngsters who gathered every Sabbath afternoon for tea at Chasya Agronsky's. They were embarked on their usual songfest, when we heard an explosion, and the immediate sirens.

All day long there had been rumors that the terrorists would attack the central police station again. All day long the British had been making preparations in the middle of town, putting up additional lanes of barbed wire through Jerusalem's main shopping street. It seemed incredible that with so much anticipation the attack would nevertheless be attempted.

I went out to see what had happened. The streets were already cleared; the armored cars were cruising. A plainclothesman asked for my papers and let me pass. Near the central police station, newly rebuilt from the last attack, armored cars were stationed.

Suddenly firing began. It was directly across the street from me, in the third floor windows of the police barracks. I watched the red winks. It seemed to me that the fire was methodically sweeping the street, from the other end toward me, and that it would reach me in another instant. There was no cover anywhere. If I ran I would attract attention. I flattened against a shopdoor, waiting for the fire to cut me down. The day I had waited with Cassidy in the snow-covered field while the shells made a pattern all around us. The time I had been caught waiting to cross a Bailey bridge while a new kind of German plane, a jet plane the GI's said, dove on us machinegunning the line of vehicles on the road, and every gun on the ground opened up on the plane but it was too fast for us and our fire only trailed it across the sky. And now in this doorway—this was what it was like to be standing before a firing squad. I felt angry at myself that I should die so stupidly. The shooting continued, and I experienced a great and terrible sense of compression, compression of time, of emotion, and not a single thought came to me.

Then I realized that the firing was directed over my head, perhaps at the roof of the building where I stood. I slipped around the corner, and almost stumbled over a fallen British officer.

A couple of soldiers ran up from the armored car, and we lifted the wounded man. He was riddled. They said from the



terrorists on the roof. An ambulance car arrived and we put him inside.

At last I got out of there.

There had been a few shots fired at the police barracks, from the roof, as cover for an attempted jailbreak. The maneuver had failed.

I was sick, sick of war, sick for the British who died hating us, sick for all of our youth with the hatred rooted in their hearts.

Then the British began searching all the colonies for arms. This was the notorious operation that was designed to break the Jewish community. Virtually all of the Jewish Agency leaders were to be put into concentration camp at Latrun, for suspected complicity with the Haganah. In the meantime the leaderless community would be smashed.

One day the British announced that "vast stores" had been discovered at Yagur; a key Jewish arsenal had been unearthed. And the search was continuing.

This opened terrifying possibilities. If determined searches were carried forward the population might be provoked into open battle. Some of the British commanders would be happy at the chance to annihilate entire settlements.

Terrible stories were current. The great dininghall at Yagur, the pride of the kibbutzim, was in flames. The British had destroyed half the livestock. Their tanks had crushed the vineyard.

The next day reporters were permitted to enter the colony. Now I returned to my old settlement, my first home in Palestine, in my guise as an American reporter.

The main gate was still blocked, for all of the farm vehicles, tractors, ancient cars and wagons, had been massed behind it. But the British had circumvented the barrier by sending a couple of tanks through the fence, and thus they had penetrated into the colony. We drove in, through the same opening. The dininghall, I saw with relief, was still standing.

The press was conducted on a tour—together with some officers who were studying the operational technique, for repetition in other settlements.

At first glance, Yagur now simply appeared to be a British military camp; the living quarters had become army barracks,

armored cars, trucks, halftracks cluttered the yard, Tommies walked with their towels and razor-kits from the showers, with the peculiar arrogant ease that all conquerors show in requisitioned domiciles. "Bloody paradise they had here," I heard one lad remark.

All the men of Yagur had been dragged away to concentration camp, and as I later saw such an operation, I use the word "dragged" advisedly. Most of the women and children had been evacuated to neighboring colonies, leaving only a skeleton group to tend to the installation.

We passed men with mine-detectors working over the grounds. This, our guide explained, was how the arms had been found. The enemy—meaning us—hadn't forseen the use of modern supersensitive mine detectors.

A few of the women of the colony passed us, swiftly, silently, with dark looks.

The guide took us first to the dininghall. I remembered when I had come here some eight years before and seen Weismann laying the last stones on these steps: I remembered the fly-infested shack that had stood on this spot when I first came to the colony. I remembered the time of the massacres in 1929 when the Haganah men had hurried through Yagur and we had had a few pistols for the entire colony, and how I had stood on guard here with a piece of iron pipe.

The dininghall was barren, the windows smashed, the tables and chairs removed. There was a stairway to the roof, and on the first landing the guide paused, pointing dramatically. A block of tiles had been removed, and underneath was a dark space about the size of a trunk, between floor and ceiling.

A half-dozen rifles had been found there, and some hand grenades.

The press of the world hastily noted the fiendish cleverness of the colonists. In their new dininghall they had a built-in hiding place for arms!

And I thought of how it probably had been when the plans were being drawn, in those years when the Nazis were paying Arab bands to attack our settlements; I thought of Benari and Weisbrod and Yehuda leaning over the table in the old flyspecked dininghall, and Benari putting a pencil here, saying, "If we have to retreat to the roof as our last post of defense—" there would



be a few rifles and some grenades on the stair-landing, in reserve.

We passed through the great dininghall, which still showed signs of a fight. The sergeant described the battle to us. The colonists had barricaded themselves in this hall, refusing to come out and be identified, cursing and reviling the troops. Well then it had been necessary to smash the windows and throw in tear gas, and then they had had to be dragged out.

The settlers hadn't used firearms against the troops, the sergeant conceded, but they had had to be subdued, and some of the women had been hard to handle. He smiled, and the correspondents smiled with understanding.

—And how many illegal immigrants had been found?

"You know how they are. You can't get a thing out of them. Stick together, and refuse even to give their names."

I knew. "Ish Ha-Eretz", each had given as his name. A man of this land.

Well then, the men had been hauled off, and the arms search had begun.

The sergeant tramped across the yard with us, to show us other cunning hiding places of weapons. He led us to a children's house.

"Imagine how they planned it all! Built-in! Using their kids as a shield!" For there, under the flagstones of the porch, was another opened cache. There too, rifles and grenades had been found.

(And Bialystocker, whose little girl lived in this house, saying, We'd better have some arms here, Moshe, in case the children's houses are cut off.)

And so we toured the entire settlement. They had discovered arms under the hay in the barn, arms in the water-tower. Altogether, a few hundred rifles and tommyguns had been found in this colony of fifteen hundred souls.

—Vast arms cache, noted the British correspondents.

But more! The guide led us to the edge of the yard and pointed to a ditch. There, a foxhole had been cleverly disguised as a job of sewage-line repair. And further along was a supposed irrigation ditch, readily transformable into a trench, with caches of arms at regular intervals, all in perfect order, the submachine-guns wrapped in oiled paper!

But all this was only the beginning. Now the sergeant led us to the big discovery, the "heavy arms warehouse" found under a

machinery shed. An actual concrete arsenal, chock-full of armaments!

He told us how this room had been uncovered. An intelligence officer had been struck by the impractical appearance of the old shed amidst the colony's spick and span new buildings. There was an obsolete tractor standing in the shed, half taken apart. Now why would anybody want to work on that old tractor? Suspecting a blind, the officer had snooped around, and presently he had leaned against a lever, and the floor had begun to give way! Yes, a sliding floor! The cunning of it! And there, below, in a concrete cellar—the arsenal!

The sergeant pushed aside a rolling door, and all was revealed. Two rows of mortars and machineguns, all new, shining, lovingly kept. Enough material to equip a heavy weapons company.

Against whom?

Mortars are scarcely weapons of choice against tanks. Obviously the material was intended to protect the colony against onslaught from neighboring Arab villages.

The correspondents photographed the arsenal. For several days the newspapers of the world headlined the story of the Jewish arms plot.

I wandered away from the group of correspondents. I saw a small, elderly woman hurrying across the yard; it was Dvoraleh, who tended the poultry. We went aside and talked for a while.

Well, it was true they hadn't molested the cattle or destroyed the vineyard. But they had looted everything from the habitations, mementos, radios, clocks, trinkets, even shoes and civilian clothing. And some of the settlers had had a little money in their rooms—all gone.

And the soldiers had dug up the whole yard in their searches, ruined the sewage system, and they had ruined the colony's economy for a year by imprisoning the men during the harvest season.

She went on, with the quiet voice of people who are used to blows, who know how to calculate the best use of their strength. Things could be kept going somehow until the men returned, for the women, housed in neighboring settlements, were coming to work here every day.

"How much did the British find?" I asked.



"About two-thirds," she said wearily. "And they are still searching."

I thought of the cost, the incredibly complex labor of gathering this small arsenal. The boys nosing around in different countries, and bargaining, and the problem of transport, the concealment of shipments as "machine parts", the tension at the port when the ships arrived, the effort to get the cases off the ships and then out of the port, and then to transport the "machinery" along the watched roads... Well, the British had it now. It would have to be replaced, better hidden. "The boys have a plan to cover everything with a demagnetizing material," she said hopefully.

And in all the settlements, I supposed, new hiding places in the fields were being feverishly dug.

Some days later I was in Jerusalem when word came of new searches. Ramat Rachel, on the outskirts of the city, was on the list. I drove out there with Clifton Daniel of the *New York Times.*

Troops lay behind machineguns, all around the entrance to the colony. As Ramat Rachel was at the end of a road, with a fall-away to the wilderness of Judea behind it, the settlement was completely cut off.

The commander of the operation had received no instructions about correspondents; he let us enter. Just beyond the gate was a two-story concrete building: on the ground floor was the dininghall, and above were children's quarters.

We stood in the doorway of this building; the narrow stairway to the children's floor was jammed with soldiers trying to drag down men. The men twisted and kicked, while hysterical women and children pummelled, pulled, tore at the British.

Across the yard were the living quarters for adults. Soldiers came from there in threes and fours, dragging men along the ground. Now came three troopers who had hold of a huge settler, by his limbs and by his hair. The man flung himself about like a caught fish. Finally, pushed to the ground, the Jew was dragged by his hair across the yard, leaving a trail as from a sack pulled through the gravel.

Another large man, his eyes bloodshot, came struggling across

the yard like a Samson, flinging half a platoon off of him. They succeeded in getting him as far as the truck onto which the men were being loaded. Now several women who had been penned in a little garden enclosure broke out, tearing and scratching at the British. A few soldiers swung at the women. The officer, standing with us, remonstrated carefully. The soldiers glanced at us and understood. The damned press was on hand. Now the colonists began to scream and curse at us—how can you stand there and watch?

The accusation echoed down my whole life.

The children were watching, too. They were watching with eyes that would hold this scene forever, seeing their fathers being beaten and dragged away by the British.

One rusty pistol was found in Ramat Rachel.

Could one wonder that the youngsters became terrorists?

Yes, all that is over now, we can shake hands with the British and forget.

* * *

Like many of the correspondents, I was contacted by the Sternists and asked whether I wanted to interview their leader. This type of interview had become routine. There would be a rendezvous with an emissary on an obscure street, the correspondent would be taken in a cab, blindfolded, changed from one cab to another, and finally led to a hidingplace in a comfortable flat where he would partake of tasty little sandwiches and wine, while talking to Friedman Yellin.

But I was more interested in learning something of the character of the terrorists themselves. Once I visited a mass trial of an entire unit of about twenty Sternists, captured while returning from an attack on a train. Few of them were out of their teens; the leader was twenty-five. Parents of the children hung about anxiously outside the court, trying to toss a little food to them when they emerged to be taken to their cells. It had to be the young, the immature, the passionate, who responded to the appeal of terror.



The girl who contacted the press at that time was tall and voluptuously shaped. She spoke English well, and was sporadically an art student, though she had had to abandon her evening courses because of her irredentist duties.

Rachel stemmed from one of the aristocratic pre-Zionist Jerusalem families, tracing several generations of residence in Palestine. Her father, a textile merchant, had been caught in France during the war and had died obscurely.

The girl lived with her mother in an ancient dwelling in an unfashionable quarter on the edge of the old city. She had a brother, and would complain to me that the idiot stuck to the Haganah, instead of joining Etzel or Lechi. Her family did not of course know of her work, though they must have suspected. Like many Jewish families, they could not hope to interfere once a child was "lost" in this passionate conviction; they could only wait prayerfully, as when a soldier is at the front. They could ask no questions about unexplained nocturnal absences of an hour or two, or about strange young men who appeared sometimes "from the settlements" and had to be given shelter overnight.

One day the papers carried a story of a particularly daring and skillful train robbery in which Sternists had seized British payroll funds. Rachel appeared, in high spirits, remarking that even her brother, that dope, was beginning to see the light. "You know what he said this morning? He said, 'You've got to hand it to the Lechi. They know how to do a job!'"

Rachel worked as a stenographer in the office of a leading accountant. She was regarded as something of a character, but she was good at her job. As we became quite friendly, she would drop by to see me after work. Once or twice I took her to the movies, and had tea at her house. Her ideas were those of a pure but limited patriot—a zealot. She had an absolute revulsion for the British, who were the oppressors in the land. For the Arabs she had a half-patronizing tolerance, even an affection, characteristic of the old-time Jewish residents.

Rachel had no political formation, and could explain nothing of the doctrine of her group except that the English had to be thrown out, Palestine had to be conquered for the Jews. After that? We'll see. In this, she was typical of all I knew of her group.

The Stern girl took delight in teasing bits of daring. After the

central police station was blown up, in Jerusalem, she went about singing a little Hebrew refrain, "potsatsa hamishtara," whose words mean "boom went the station-house!" and it was her special delight to intone this whenever we passed a British soldier.

She would tell me things suddenly, impulsively. Obviously I had no way of checking on their truth; often they sounded to me like melodramatic imaginings, but all that the Sternists did was of that character, so there was no reason to doubt her confidences.

The entrance to her house, for instance, was through a little door in a dark lane. One came directly onto a murky flight of stairs. Once as we were stumbling up the stairs, Rachel touched my arm and said, with repressed mirth, "You know who lives below us? I'll tell you. A British policeman."

We entered her flat, her mother offered us tea, and we went to sit in Rachel's room, which was adorned with a few of her water-colors—quite talented. She picked up her little story. "And you know, underneath the policeman's flat we have a basement which we share with him. Once the boys came here with a package. They didn't have where to leave it."

House-to-house searches were going on in Jerusalem at that time. And the searches were thorough, with everything minutely ransacked.

Still with her look of suppressed mirth, Rachel informed me that she had put the suitcase of TNT, which the boys had left, right down there in her family's storage-place in the basement. "I thought it's a good place, in our house, because where a policeman lives, maybe they won't even search."

Despite her exciting connection and her very exciting appearance, she seemed to be a rather lonesome girl. She told me that she and her sweetheart had been separated because the movement did not permit such close ties amongst its members.

Once there was a violent midday action when several Sternists were tracked across Mamilah cemetery, in the center of Jerusalem. Two were killed, and others were known to have been wounded. Rachel had been complaining to me that she was never permitted to take part in a direct action, as she was reserved for contact work. But that morning she had warned me to stay off the streets, particularly around noon. I was afraid this time she might be directly involved.

I didn't see her for a few days. One evening she appeared;



the girl was in a state of tension plainly close to combat shock. She had been assigned to first aid work, on that other day, and even while the action had been taking place, she and one of the boys had been trying to requisition the services of a doctor. There was one physician with whom they had had previous contact, sounding him out for the movement, but he had not responded, and this time they had had to disclose themselves to him. Even so, the doctor had refused to go with them. "So now we are known," she told me, worriedly.

They had unsuccessfuly tried to get another physician to respond to a blind call. Finally, as a few of their wounded comrades had got back to headquarters, Rachel and some boys had rushed to a nearby doctor, and forced him to come with them.

Thus she had exposed herself to more than one person that day as a Sternist. After a while, Rachel fell into a depressed mood, and then suddenly she cried out, "Oh, why don't we do something! What are we waiting for! Waiting! Why don't we blow them all up!" It was as though she had to rush out and impale herself to have her execution over with.

A few weeks later Rachel come to see me again. This time there was a reason for her terror. She had been asked to appear at police headquarters. Did they know? Did they have any proof?

I tried to reassure her that the call was probably over some routine matter. Otherwise they would simply have arrested her.

"You don't know them, you don't know them!" she cried. "Oh, our boys, what they go through with the C.I.D.!" She began recounting the tortures that some of the boys had described after getting away from the English. I never knew how much of this to believe. Certainly there were men in the special police squads who would not have hesitated to employ the worst means; moreover, terrorism inevitably evokes such countermeasures. And even in the mass-arrests of ordinary citizens, during widespread searches, there was evidence of ill-treatment of the early Nazi variety, of latrine-cleaning ordered to be done with bare hands, of insults and indignities.

Perhaps some of the tortures she described were continuations in her own imagination. But there were boys beaten to death, that was known.

And now her own name was on their list.

Of sixteen members she had known in the organization, Rachel said, eleven had by now been caught.

All the next day I was depressed with worry. Toward evening she came by to tell me of her interview. She had received an indirect warning from the C.I.D. They had asked her questions revolving about her identity card. But in a cat and mouse way they had given her to understand that she was being watched.

I didn't see Rachel for a week or two, and then she appeared one evening and said, "Oh, if you knew the things I have to do!" She had been busy in the old city preparing a meeting place for her unit. It was in one of the labyrinthine alleys, down through a kind of dungeon into a still deeper cellar, in the rock of the Mount.

She had been scrubbing the walls, the floor, down there in that hole. Rachel curled her fingers disgustedly, as though the feeling of decay was still on them. The hole was fetid: it hadn't been cleaned for centuries. "Do you know who lived there? A beggar. A leper. He died; that's how we got the place."

And after the place was clean there was another nauseating task. Since they had had difficulty in securing medical aid, the girls in the unit were being taught to sew up bleeding wounds. She couldn't bear the sight of blood. She didn't know how she would be able to do it...

In one of our arrangements for an interview, Rachel had given me a token by which I would recognize a messenger. There was a little golden dice which she wore on a chain. "He will show you one like this."

Now on a weekend I encountered Rachel in Tel Aviv, and went with her to the house of one of her girl friends, for tea. Her friend was a law student, and the daughter of a well-to-do merchant. The flat was crowded and padded with all the signs of bourgeois ease—a radio-phonograph from America, a frigidaire, etc. During the tea, I noticed that the other girl also wore a little chain with a golden dice.

Rachel followed my glance. Afterward she took me aside and insisted, "Listen, you mustn't think my friend is one of us—" But the incident had precisely the character of a children's maladroit spying game that was part of the atmosphere around



the terrorists, contrasting so frightfully with the bloodiness of their work.

One afternoon there was snow in Jerusalem. There had been no snowfall whatever for a few years. Indeed, snowfall was so rare in the city as to bring an instant holiday mood.

I was at work on the script of *My Father's House,* when Rachel came bursting into the apartment, together with her law-student friend. They dragged me out into the street, running and snowballing me and each other and passers-by. Soon we were joined by a young man they knew, and we all dodged down Ben Yehuda Street engaging in snowfights.

Across the street were a number of British soldiers, and my Sternist friends challenged them. All down the block and around the corner into Jaffa Road they pelted each other. At first it was just play, but gradually there began to be something vicious in the charges, and then from a machinegun post atop a building some Tommies joined in the war, hailing down snowballs. One of these struck Rachel. There was a stone in it.

The young man with us sputtered invectives, his pupils turned red, and he started to charge across the street. I caught hold of him and managed to get the Sternists into a café. Their fury gradually came under control while their dripping garments dried.

Shortly afterward, Rachel appeared to tell me she had been put on leave from the group for several months, because she was under C.I.D. suspicion.

Sometimes we talked of her future. She wanted to study, she wanted to get married, she wanted to paint. I felt she could probably never discipline herself enough to be a good painter. It was difficult to imagine how the children of those years would ever steady down to a normal life. Yet members of the bitterest resistance groups in other countries had managed.

* * *

For weeks, arms searches continued. But after Yagur, no important depot had been found. Slowly the campaign subsided.

From the overcrowded detention camps, men began to trickle back to their homes, to their labor in the fields.

And in this season of tension and struggle and blood, Passover came.

One evening in Jerusalem at a gathering in Moshe Shertok's house I saw a familiar figure scuttling into the hall. It was Yehuda, from Yagur. He was living with his brother while studying composition at the Jerusalem conservatory.

"Where are you going for Passover?" Yehuda asked. "Come to us. I am conducting my service."

The great dininghall had been restored; for the festival, narrow plank tables and benches had been built so that the entire kibbutz could be accomodated at one sitting. And on one side of the hall, a platform had been built.

Nearly all the men were home from Athlit and Latrun. Several of Yagur's members who had been on duty in Europe, training immigrants, had managed to get home for the holiday. The lads of the Palmach, too, had come home for the holiday, from their stations.

Now, in all the generations, Passover has been a family service, leisurely and warm, dominated by the patriarch. It is a slow ritual feast, and between each course and between each bite there are passages to be read, and in the families with traditions of learning there are dissertations and commentaries upon each passage, upon each word—why do we do thus and so instead of so and thus? what did rabbi Hillel say of this point, and what was the comment of rabbi Eleazer?

In the Passovers in villages in Galicia—now gone—and in apartments in Warsaw, sons-in-law would dispute with learned brothers-in-law and with the most learned grandfathers, and to make certain that no one was in error, every variation of the service would be added, until the ceremony went late into the night. These were the Passovers in the memory of the older settlers.

How then could a community of fifteen hundred souls hold a family Passover service?

But there was a new kind of Passover in the kibbutzim. Where



might the Jews have the daring to alter their traditional ritual if not here?

The actual service was performed on the stage, where the ritual was danced, recited, with the celebrants in the hall as a chorus. It was a form of festival that had its necessity and origin in their community way of life, and therefore it was a true festival.

On one side of the stage sat the Yagur orchestra. Facing them were the participants, selected from children to elders in the community. The center of the stage was for dancers.

Yehuda conducted the whole.

The service began with a dance of the planting season, performed by a small group of youths and maidens. Then an elder colonist arose and chanted the beginning of the traditional recital of the days when we were slaves under the Pharaohs in Egypt. The orchestra gravely echoed his recitation. And thus each passage of the service was chanted, sung or spoken; for each pestilence, one rose, and for each incident in the flight from Egypt, another rose; for each of the four questions, a different child arose, and the replies were repeated in chorus. A woman recited the deliverance, and the entire hall joined in the great responses, as a family might have joined in the services of other times.

The music that Yehuda had composed was linked to the mode of synagogue chanting, and sometimes it rose with a cantor's lyricism, and sometimes it echoed the songs of Arab shepherds, and sometimes the songs of the chalutzim. Several times the dancers appeared while the ceremonial meal progressed.

Where, in two thousand years, had there been such a renewal of our way of worship? Where had our national life given such new form to the ancient content? It seemed to me that I was in the very center of the creative continuation of our culture. It was as though for an instant the historic processes lay open before us, and I glimped the way things came to be, and I was awed as in watching the opening of a flower.

In each settlement a service was being held in a way found by the people of the place, for here tradition belonged to them, and could be altered by the common will.

After the meal the settlers gathered in small family groups, in their own rooms; some had a little wine, a little tea, sweets, good

things, nuts and candies with which to finish the festival. And later they began to drift again toward the great dininghall; the tables had been cleared out of the way. Some of the older settlers —from my time—waited all year for this night, for the one time when they still danced the hora was on Passover.

The hora began, and would continue all night long.

By dawn, only the last few would remain, feverish, exalted, circling in the dance.

No, it did not have the warm intimacy of the old-style Passover, and some of the aged grandparents sat and watched, lonesome for the rich, full Passover holidays of their youth, and for all the dead. They soon went off to their rooms. No, for some this seemed a poor way of life. And yet there were many sons and daughters grown on the place who had never experienced a different kind of service, and for whom this Passover surely had all the magic associations that the holidays of their own youth had for the old ones.

I knew too that though this group life had not worked well for some of the pioneers, most had adjusted to it. Of the eighty who had been there in my time about fifty remained; a few had sought places in the small-holders settlements, some had sought work in the cities, some had merely changed over to other kibbutzim. But adjustment and change was normal to a pioneer society. There were those who had left Yagur because it had become a large industrial-agricultural kibbutz, while they wanted to live in a stabilized collective with a limited number of families. But many were content; people like Bialystocker were filled with satisfaction in what they had built; their growth, taken form in their buildings, stood all around them. It was achieved out of their own hands. Was it cold achievement? Did they feel a personal development, a personal fulfillment also?

That I couldn't know. They had their children, and the children had little desire to seek another form of life. They had been raised to this. It was the older ones who had formed the bridge, and in some of their faces one saw a kind of isolation, and I thought it strange that one felt this isolation more strongly in a commune than in an individualist society.

I could only feel that as a way of life this group living would remain; some of the ultra-idealistic macerations were disappearing, the "vegetarians" were fewer, but the form in essence was



established. Yagur itself was perhaps untypical, having grown so large, and Fritz Lichtenstein said to me, "Those were the best days, the warmest days, when you were here, the days of our early struggles." But this too contained the softening in everyone's heart for the past.

Group life was suited to some, not to others—that had to be recognized, so that one no longer felt himself a social destroyer if he wanted to leave a kibbutz. And as the communes grew richer, some of the early hardships proved to be difficulties associated not with the communal way of life but with pioneering.

Now it was even admitted that a portion of privacy was a necessity in human life, and the plans for future dwellings called for sections facing in different directions, to enhance family privacy. In the future each couple could hope for two rooms instead of one. And there was a relaxation in the communal upbringing of children: more often now they stayed overnight in their parents' room, and there were some colonies where children spent only their days in the nursery, and their evenings and nights with their parents entirely.

Like so much in Eretz Israel, this way of life was still in formation. One thing had to be remembered: the Yishuv was an overall renaissance, and within it all these experiments were in movement. The life of the Yishuv didn't depend on the success or failure of one form of commune or co-operative, on the emergence of pure communism or modified capitalism—these were subordinate formations; the life of the Yishuv was in the fact that a new Passover had already been born.

* * *

In this atmosphere of resistance, achievement, terror, construction, and undeclared war, I was trying to prepare the scenario for our film.

Certainly it was tempting in this country in state of revolt to devise a story of underground resistance, of the events of the very days in which we lived. There was unlimited dramatic material offered daily. But I felt that the first big film about Palestine

should be on the fundamental theme of this land—regeneration. It should be a positive story of what the country gave to those who came to it. Secondly, there was a practical factor to be considered: under British control it would be difficult enough to operate in the land, but to attempt to film a resistance story seemed truly a fantastic gamble.

Before leaving New York I had written a hasty outline of a story about a group of refugees, first seen as they were leaving their camp in Europe. The story followed their voyage to Palestine on an illegal ship, and showed how their new life in Eretz Israel brought several of them onto the road to readjustment. Among them was a doctor who had lost his medical vocation—I remembered Tibor, a physician I had met near Munich, and how he had said, "I'll learn to be a mechanic, perhaps; I can never trust myself with a sick person again; I let them die all around me, in the camps. It seems so stupid to patch up people in this world." And there was a young woman tormented with the guilt of having remained alive when her husband and baby were killed. And there was a little boy who was obsessed with the belief that he would find his father alive in Palestine—I remembered a boy who would not leave Buchenwald after liberation because his father had said, "Wait here for me until I come back." This would be a boy whose father said, "I will meet you in Eretz Israel."

We decided to concentrate on the story of the child. There were several required elements in the design of the story. It had to show as widely and as unobtrusively as possible the physical nature of Palestine and the nature of Zionist achievement. It had to show a good deal of life in a typical settlement. It had to show what Palestinians were like. And there were my own personal requirements, hoarded over twenty years—that I would some day make a film here that would include the classic view of the sea of Galilee, from the hill above Kinnereth, that I would some day put the old city of Jerusalem into a film, that I would some day put the awesome wastes around the Dead Sea into a film, that I would have a real hora in a film, and show the overnight construction of a new colony.

Wasn't it an artificial task, as artificial as the construction of a film story in Hollywood? to sit down to weave all these obligatory scenes into a pattern? The answer can be found in all



the history of art. The free individual artist trying to express his personality is a relatively modern conception. Art evolved out of group memorializing. And every artist is also an artisan; even random expression must be willfully manipulated. Beneath every picture, every piece of music, every story, every work of sculpture, is form, and few artists will protest against the impositions of forms that come from the nature of the material they manipulate, so long as they are spiritually free in their interpretation of the meaning of the material. A muralist, for instance, will accept the doors and windows of a room as part of his problem in design; the very addition of obligatory factors stimulates invention.

But the obligatory scenes imposed in Hollywood contain obligatory interpretation, prescribed ideas or vacancy of ideas, obligatory characters. Constructing a story to include given elements is an entirely other matter when one begins with a sympathetic subject. A Christian painter has no resistance to an order for an Annunciation. And I desired nothing more passionately than to make a Palestine film. To set oneself a series of problems of the sort I wanted to solve in this film is nothing more than an exercise in craftsmanship wich may produce stimulating results—as this one did.

Since I wanted to cover so much physical territory it became clear that the story would have to be one of movement, of a pursuit or a search. A search for the boy's family could lead him all over Palestine. Each episode in each new place would have to have a mounting significance within the story. And a way had to be found to dramatize the past connection of the Jew with this land.

It was obvious that in the mounting drama of the child's disappointment as he went from farm to town to wilderness, from familiar people to strangers in his search, there would at last come a climax and a collapse. But it wasn't until after Kline's arrival, when we were taking a walk one morning as I outlined the story as it had so far developed, that the pure symbol of collapse and regeneration took form for me in the literal idea of rebirth. A child wanting to return to the time of security, the time when he had his parents, a child wanting to be born again. With this, the whole story swung into line.

There would be a little boy who remembered the last words

of his father, as the Germans seized the family, "Run into the woods, you'll find us afterwards in Palestine." And my story would tell of the child's obsession, grown from this one behest, this one promise that kept him alive. He would have to find his family, even if the search led him back to the womb.

From the moment of his arrival in a nighttime illegal landing in Palestine, he would attempt his search. At the first opportunity, he would run away from the colony to which he was taken, to seek his father's house. There would be the efforts of the settlers to deal with his problem, and in these scenes I could show the way of life in the settlements, the children's homes, the meetings at which all problems were discussed, the concern of the older settlers for the refugees.

After another attempt to run away, they would decide to place him in a special camp for children with problems like his own, and this would serve to generalize my story. But just as the survivors in Europe at first rejected reality, the boy would refuse the knowledge that he was an orphan like other orphans, he would break out upon his individual route of passion.

This could lead to Tel Aviv, where the child would trace someone of his own name—a violinist in the orchestra; and thus something of the cultural activity in the country could be shown. A further disappointment, and yet another clue to someone of his name would lead him to the Dead Sea where we could place an episode in the potash works, touching upon the life of a Jewish industrial worker.

And here would come the transition in the story from reality to symbolic reality, as a compassionate worker pretended to be his uncle (my brother's name was Israel). The catastrophe had to flow from the child's organic inability to accept what was false, even if it brought comfort into his life. He had to discover that his "uncle" was a pretender. And that the only way to a true family was through birth. If necessary through rebirth.

And as sometimes happens when a design turns out felicitously, every element in nature and in history seemed to come to my aid. For the very scenery around the Dead Sea, the irreal truncated hills, ashgray and bereft of vegetation, and in some lights orange like parts of a world beginning to be created, and the symbol of the Dead Sea itself as a source of contradiction in nature, and the symbol of the colony by the Dead Sea that had succeeded in



bringing about the rebirth of the soil, in making life flourish in this arid poisonous world, all this was perfectly adapted to my theme.

For suggestive value, there would be a baby in the worker's family, and the boy would then absorb the thought—"Lucky baby, born here."

The story required that he then enter into a chaos, as though returning into unformed matter, and this was at once realistically and symbolically possible through his being lost in the Dead Sea wilderness, in that fierce cradle of creation, as he fled through the desert, after discovering the falsity of his life with his adoptive family.

Still possessed of his obsession, the child would seek to reach Jerusalem where he had learned there was a register of all the survivors from Europe. There he would make the last effort to find his father.

And again it was at once symbol and reality that the boy, coming up from the Dead Sea, should enter not the new but the old city of Jerusalem, and as he became lost in its narrow mazes, as he penetrated deeper and deeper into the cavernous recesses, the web of symbol and reality became a single texture, and the boy returned through murky tunnels toward the glimmer of light at the far end, returned through history itself toward birth.

Then there would be the priests encountering the lost boy on the Via Dolorosa and leading him back to his own people in an ancient synagogue, and the bearded patriarchal worshippers repeating the boy's question, "Where are the names of the fathers?... Here we have the names in the Torah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—"

At every turn now, the scene itself contained the wanted ideas, form and content melting into perfect unity. For certainly by now the exhausted child, frightened, lost, was in a state where his mind could make any leap, and there was needed only a final device to detach the last filament of reality, and allow the symbol to enchain the remainder of the tale. This came in the idea of Purim. The historical motif served on several planes: there was the direct welding of present and past in the parallel between Hitler and his counterpart in the time of the Persian exile, Haman. And through this link came the final disintegration of the time-sense, and the establishment of the child's ordeal as the

eternal unending ordeal of every Jew, where the present becomes fused with the past through parallel and repetition, and time ceases to exist, and all history is forever present, living within the soul of every Jew.

On the visual plane, the Purim device was beautiful through the holiday masquerade of the children, for this permitted a realistic connection that once more carried us into ideational reality. For the young were ancients in their beards and voluminous garments, and as the lost boy encountered the Purim children in the alleys of the old city there were no longer children and elders, but only eternal beings.

On the psychological plane this device was equally suggestive, for the confusion of images, the children with beards, the masquerade of costumes of ancient times and other lands, dissolved the last frame of reality in the child's mind. Who were they? What were they? What were fathers? What were children? All concepts shimmered and became transformed.

Even the geography of the city, the existence of Jerusalem on two sides, old and new, abetted the logic of the action. The masked children surrounding the boy, leading him on the road between the old city and the new, to the last station of his agony, the registry center where all the names were to be found.

Again here, what was actual was perfectly symbolic. For the concept of a universal registry is in itself associated with creation, eternity, heaven, the place from which life issues. This room where the child had to learn of his family's death was necessarily the transfer-point for rebirth, as though he had journeyed to the celestial registry to renew his identity.

And when in my preparations for filming the story I went to enquire about the actual location of the registry office, I found it to be as though designed for us: it was in the subcellar of an ancient ruins, from "the Turks, the Romans, from all the wars", on the edge of Mamilah cemetery. One entered by descending a narrow stone stairway, and the archives were in domed alcoves, as though designed for our picture.

Here, then, the boy encountered finite truth, seizing the family folder into his own hands, learning that his people were dead. And as he emerged, the crowd of Purim children with their beards, their young voices, surrounded him; they were now his



ancestors, his precreators. The collapse was inevitable, and the reversion to infancy, through his desire to be born again.

I knew enough of psychiatry to feel that my device was valid, but I was surprised to learn, some time later, how closely I had struck to the typical survivor trauma. I do not offer it here except that it again proved to me that if one followed the true nature of one's material one would inevitably be led to the true denouement. It is a law of dramaturgy that denouement flows from the content itself, and so it had come to me.

When our film was completed, I met an analyst, Dr. Paul Friedman, who had been sent to the DP camps to make a special study of survivor psychoses. Reversion to childhood, he told me, was one of the most common forms of psychiatric disorder amongst the refugees. Indeed, as I outlined my story to him, he seemed unable to accept it as a fiction, but kept referring to it as "your case" or "the case you found", pointing out that it was "a perfect history".

The rebirth of the child through his return to infant security now required to be followed by an action that would bring him back to normal reality, to self-realization. What my story wanted to say was that this could happen through the regenerating force of the land of Israel itself, the land fructified in the whole of Jewish past. This motive had to be prepared in an early incident, and the child's family name, the ancient name of Halevi, could serve as the link to the past in this land. The child's father had taught him to write his name, Halevi, in Hebrew. There remained only the discovery of an ancient stone, bearing the name of Halevi, in the final incident—a stone uncovered through ploughing the land of a new colony in the Negev.

The child, already opened to recovery through his acceptance of two people who loved him as "mother" and "father", recovered his link to reality in the shock of reading his name, Halevi, on the ancient stone, and in the excitement of building a new colony. All the people who had tried to help him, in Palestine, had become a family to him. The gloss of the conventional happy ending was avoided, in the sense that the child remembered and carried with him the tragedy of his family self. He was able to go on, virtually reborn, because of the positive forces of life that demand continuity and development, and because of the love about him, and the help drawn from his entire historic past.

There was one factor that particularly pleased me in the evolution of the story. I felt that all of my own contact with Jewish tradition had gone into the making of it. It was a story that came out of the Bible and Jewish martyrology, it had something of Chassidic legendry in its theme of reincarnation, and it had a symbolism that belonged in a writer of the same people as Kafka, and it had a psychological content that flowed from Freud. While the level of value in the story is a matter for others to judge, I was pleased that its source was pure. I may not be a Kafka or a Freud, but tradition flows in minor as well as in major creative spirits, the Jewish ways in the mind are deepened, and the material is carried onward; it is in this way that culture continues, and if I have done nothing else in my life than contribute an impulse to this stream, I am not lost.

This then was my story. I felt I had solved every problem, because of the beautiful wealth of the material itself. A score of minor requirements were fulfilled with equal felicity; when an official of the Jewish National Fund suggested that there should be a Sabbath service in the film, I found that such a scene could be used to further the child's vision of security in the home of his self-announced uncle, and also to recall to the boy the warmth of his childhood home when the same Sabbath songs had resounded at the table. When Herbert Kline suggested that Christianity be somehow brought into the film, I found that a meeting with priests on the Via Dolorosa could awaken a whole series of echoes in the passion of the boy to the passion of Christ.

While I completed the screenplay, Kline familiarized himself with the country, and canvassed the actors in Habima, Ohel, and the Chamber Theater. As it happened, none of them suited the three leading roles, and we had to search for "real people" for them.

Probably no major film was ever made under conditions so difficult as those facing us. The cameraman, Floyd Crosby, had to train his crew during the making of the film. As there was no laboratory in Palestine the entire picture had to be shot



without the possibility of checking scenes as we went along. We were in a country upset by revolution; much of the work had to be done in outlying settlements, and there were constant restrictions on the roads, hampering our movements. Moreover, we had to invade factories, settlements, institutions, upsetting their labor during a time of manpower shortage. And it is harassing to try to get a scene right when the actors are eager to get back to their plowing.

We also encountered a curious psychological resistance in some parts of the population. The Jews of Palestine were fighting for nationhood. They were understandably ultranationalistic. One had to accept and deal with this.

For example, many patriots couldn't understand why we weren't making the film in Hebrew. It was of little use to explain that the outside world didn't understand Hebrew. There were diehards who refused to take part in the film for this reason.

A popular columnist demanded: Why couldn't the first Palestine film be made entirely by Palestinians? How could Americans interpret the inner spirit of the Yishuv? Wasn't there enough talent in the land?

But though there was this element of resistance in the population—where, in Jewish activity, isn't there an overhealthy opposition? our project was a great event in the country, and generally regarded as a national cause. The group of youngsters who became at once the cast and crew regarded their services as of paramount national interest, indeed some of them were given leave from their posts in the Palmach to work with us.

The first of these adherents was a stocky, curly-haired lad who secured the Jerusalem address where I was working on the script. He appeared one evening and shyly confessed that he had advance information about us from his father, who was Jerusalem correspondent of the Davar. What he wanted was quite simple. He wanted to learn to be a film-maker. He was certain that he had a vocation for films. He would do anything, work as a porter, errand boy, carry the camera—and he could also be an actor. He would work free. Just so he might learn how a film was made.

Thus Chayim Bendor became the first member of the crew, as a sort of office boy and cataloguer of prospective talent. Chayim—the name means "life"—was at once dreamy and stubborn, willing and implacable: he came to be the whipping-boy and

the rescue-man of the production; his character and his history tell, as well as I know, the essential truth of the Yishuv.

As for work—there was no limit. Often we had pre-dawn shots, for which preparations had to be made in the middle of the night. Chayim was always the first on hand; he lugged the heaviest equipment cases, gave everyone a hand even though the task was outside his "department". Chayim stayed with the crew at night until the last end-test was developed, the last bit of equipment put away.

But when given detailed responsibility, he was lovably, irritatingly impossible. We had the unhappy idea, at the beginning, of making him property man. Scarcely a day passed but what we would have to send a car rushing back to headquarters because Chayim had forgotten the bag with the Arab clothes, or a certain flute, or the propbox itself.

Finally we relieved him of this duty and told him he was the slave of Crosby, the cameraman. It became one of Chayim's chores to push the camera when there was a travelling shot. The action would be rehearsed so that the movements of perhaps fifteen people, actors and crew, co-ordinated. Crosby would glue himself to the camera, the action would begin, and the camera would stay right where it was because Chayim was intently watching the players.

I had a long and epic battle with Chayim over the question of key-rings. We had three cars, and a half-dozen people driving them. Naturally the last man to use a car would put the keys in his pocket and walk off with them. So I told Chayim to get six complete sets of keys, on rings. Chayim discovered a peculiarly Palestinian type of key-ring that permitted keys to drop off. It was usually the gas key that got lost. When two or three cars had been stranded miles from gas, as a result, I suggested to Chayim that there were obtainable in Jerusalem ordinary round key-rings from which keys would not drop. But he couldn't buy those. They were not totsaret-haaertz—Palestine made.

But if he had no memory for detail, Chayim had a gift for faces. From the beginning, he became the unofficial casting director for background types and for small-part actors. He would hear us worrying around the office about where to dig up a huge, youthful optimist. "I have a friend in Sdot Yam,"



he'd say. "If you drive past there, ask for Dan Ben Amotz, it's worth your while to take a look at him."

Now, everyone has such suggestions. Usually we would drive ten miles down obscure side-roads only to discover that the prospective big optimist was stubby and glum. Chayim, however, never made a bad casting suggestion.

From this, it was a natural step to directing background action. He was full of lively invention. No matter how many times I was to see the film, afterward, there were always some little background details of Chayim's that I hadn't noticed before.

And we began to be appalled at the breadth and diversity of his acquaintanceship. It was soon apparent that amongst the younger generation, Chayim was somebody. He was the one they all looked to when a reaction was taking form.

Once, after a brutally irritating day of work under a broiling sun, I got mad at Chayim over some bit of forgetfulness, and in a burst of temper I fired him. The next day I realized not only that I had been unjust, but that I had committed a real blunder, as Chayim was still needed to act in a number of scenes. He came back without a bit of rancor, and we became better friends than ever.

We hadn't been able to find a role of any particular significance for him, so he was playing one of the group of refugees. Yet I noticed that whenever he was within camera range, Chayim found some bit of characterization—unobtrusive, nothing in the way of scene-stealing, but always enough to banish emptiness from the scene. Chayim would be chewing on a straw, or falling asleep in an audience listening to speeches—bits like that.

Toward the close of our work, he discussed his future with me. The boy was passionately set upon making films in Palestine. He was ready to undergo any hardship to perfect himself, to study. Undoubtedly he had a director's talent. But how long would it be before there would be occupation for a film director in Palestine?

His father came to see me one day. Like so many young men, Chayim found it difficult to confide in his father, and the older man talked to me touchingly. "I want to help him, and I don't know how... If there is anything I can do—?"

A year later, when I was filming *The Illegals,* I met several

young Palestinians of Chayim's generation, in strange corners of Europe where they were stationed on the Haganah underground. They always mentioned Chayim with special warmth. And in the feverish labor of getting our equipment onto an illegal vessel, one night off the Italian shore, a last greeting was called to me, "Regards to Chayim Bendor, when you get to Eretz."

I never delivered those regards, though I didn't realize how close we were to Chayim when we were in jail in Haifa, just after our ship's arrival. Once, during the making of *My Father's House,* he had said dreamily, "There's one thing I want to live for—at least I want to live to see this film, and know how it all goes together." A year later a print of *My Father's House* arrived in Palestine and there was a special screening for the participants. But Chayim wasn't there. He was on duty.

For during that week, Arabs had massacred a score of Jewish workers in the oil refinery in Haifa harbor. The following night a Palmach punitive squad raided the base of the Arab attack, Wallad El Sheikh, close to Yagur, the very same village that had given us trouble nearly twenty years before. It was not Chayim Bendor's unit that was assigned to the expedition, but he insisted on replacing an absent friend. He was killed, in the forefront of the attack.

Friends told me that when *My Father's House* played in Jerusalem, shortly afterward, Chayim's father attended every showing of the film. Several months later, during the siege of Jerusalem, the father was killed by shellfire, while out gathering news of casualties on Ben Yehuda Street.

* * *

While we were still seeking actors for the leading roles in *My Father's House* there was an incident that remained with me as one of those peculiar experiences that trouble us even though they are out of our reach for remedy, haunting us simply because things aren't the way they should be in this world.

For our leading role we needed a boy of ten or eleven, who



spoke English. Fairly early in the search, a Jerusalem boy had been brought in who had, as Crosby at once declared, a face that would appeal to any mother and father; he was sensitive and intelligent, but was already thirteen, and about a head taller than the child in my conception. I had imagined a child violent in his smallness, his very compact littleness adding force to his obsessive will to find his family. So while we had Ronnie in reserve as satisfactory, I roamed Palestine up to the last moment, looking for a smaller, younger child, and also for one who wasn't perhaps as thoroughly lovable, a child with something of rage in him. In every colony I asked whether there were settlers from America, England, South Africa, with a little boy. Our requirement was broadcast, and appeared in the press.

Among the letters we received was one from Haifa, couched in stiffly polite language, about a boy named Robert who "rides and plays the piano and has many other accomplishments." Robert sounded like the well-brought-up child of an English family. The writer of the letter had neglected to supply an address, but mentioned that the child attended St. Luke's school. Since nearly all Jewish children attended Jewish schools, it seemed certain that Robert was an English boy, and in the circumstances could scarcely be considered for the principle role of our refugee film.

But in the photograph the boy looked right. And if he played the piano at the age of ten, I thought he probably had a Jewish mother. Quite a few British officers had married Jewish girls. And if he were half-Jewish, we might be able to use him. He was worth looking up.

St. Luke's proved to be one of the public schools where a few Jewish children were also to be found. Robert was quite small, coming to my waist. He was sturdy, as might be a lad who had savagely survived. And he had precisely that rather dogged look of repressed violence that I had visualized, often broken by an appealing smile.

To me, the factor of height was immensely important, as I felt the child had to be a little tyke rather than a growing boy, and the few years of age made a great difference in the trueness of child behavior. I asked Robert to read a bit of the dialogue, and he was not as tenderly affecting as Ronnie, but good in another sense. Robert seemed to be the answer. Particularly when

I learned that he lived with his mother in the house of a family named Epstein, and I found that his mother was working there in exchange for her keep. She was from Poland. The child's father, I surmised, was the British police officer whose last name he carried, but I felt sure we would have no difficulty about this, as the boy was being raised in the Jewish community.

The mother's eagerness to provide him with an excellent upbringing was touching. Even with her meagre means, she managed to get piano lessons for him, and Robert played a piece for me on the Epstein's golden-oak upright.

A meeting with the police officer was arranged. He was quite agreeable to our project, and it was obvious that there was a truly strong tie between him and the child, who seemed, in his sturdy, forthright manners, to be modelling himself after the Englishman.

During these approaches I had a few talks with Robert, and twisted, subterranean ideas began to come out. Sometimes he talked from the point of view of an Englishman about "those Jews". He was clear in his mind that he was a Jew, and he was quite ready to play the part of the Jewish orphan boy, telling me that his own mother's family had been burned by the Germans, in Poland. And yet again and again he would adopt the outside attitude, using the word Jew with something of contempt. He had been to a party once where "of course" Jewish boys weren't allowed—remarks like that.

We passed a concrete war-time shelter, walking together, and Robert remarked, "That's where those Arab boys lie in wait for me, with their knives." And then, in the jumbled fantasy and reality of a child's world, he described his battles with the Arab boys. "When they say things about my mother, that's what I won't allow! I'll kill them if they call my mother names!"

Slowly I sensed the contours of the child's mind, so filled with terrors and conflicts. To be an honorable upstanding Englishman like the officers in the Palestine police, like the rulers and high people, but to be loyal and proud of his Jew mother in her poverty. I couldn't help wondering whether the British officer had planned sometime to take the boy "out of all this" to England, to make a superior being out of him. And through Robert I began to understand, to feel in my very muscles, the



nationalistic, even the chauvinistic fever that arose in our people in the homeland through the presence of the outside ruler. For through the presence of the Englishman the Jew-shame could be continued even here, as in this poor boy, and though such cases were not frequent, something of what was in them, something of the inference that we were not really a civilized people, was projected into everyone's life. Overnationalism was the compensation. Then I understood that at least in one land, there had to be no one above us, no one before us as an example of superiority.

Robert's mother realized that we might have some hesitation about the Yishuv's acceptance of an English boy in the film, and on my next visit she called me aside. She had something to reveal to me. Robert was not the child of the Englishman. He was a true Jewish child of a Jewish father—and she showed me a Hebrew divorce paper, to prove this.

I didn't want to enquire into the tragic tangle of her life. I was by then satisfied that we could have the boy accepted, Jew or half-Jew. And now I realized that there was another factor in Robert's candidacy for the role. To this woman the film was a life-saving opportunity. The money we could pay would give her a new start, take her out of her dependant situation, out of her unsatisfactory relationship, yes, it would perhaps literally save her life, and straighten out much of Robert's life. For he would have the great pride of having helped his mother. He would no longer have his dual attitude toward being a Jew, and he would become part of the community.

More—he was only ten, and if he proved a good child actor, the film might open a career to him. Yet all these personal factors could not be permitted to influence a casting decision. That had to be made solely on fitness for the role.

Mother and son prepared to come to Jerusalem for a test. Robert was dressed in his Sunday—or Sabbath—clothes, and the Epstein family sent him off like a little hero.

I did my best to prepare him for possible disappointment, explaining that other boys were being considered, that if he did not win in the test it would not be because he was in any way inferior, but because of things that couldn't be helped, like maybe some other boy looking more exactly like the boy of our story. I tried to say all these things, but knew that in the

heart of the child there would only be success or failure, and that he would take failure as personal, and that in the conflicts of his little life this might be grave. These were cruel risks that could not be avoided.

I took them to our office, and Crosby photographed the boy, and Robert read the test scene again. Truly, I felt it was impossible to know. Perhaps he would not have been as good as Ronnie; perhaps he would have suited the part better. But both Crosby and Kline felt that he didn't have the natural appeal of Ronnie. The still photographs were not much to go by, and there was no longer time for a screen test. And I had become so emotionally involved that I couldn't insist on the basis of my own judgement.

The boy and his mother slept over in my apartment, waiting for the decision. The poor kid in nervousness wet the bed.

I didn't have the courage to tell him he had been eliminated, and sent a friend to do the dirty job, and escort them to a taxi that would take them back to Haifa, to the little Arabs with the knives lurking in the tunnels.

I wrote him a letter, trying again to explain that nothing in him had failed. I am haunted partly by wondering what the film would have been like, with this boy, but mostly I am haunted by wondering whether we made Robert's life in any way worse.

And this is one of the strange things that we sometimes do in the world, the strange ways in which by a movement, by a word, we produce pain or evil, utterly outside our wish or control or ability to remedy. It is as though in passing on a busy street we were accidentally to block someone who was trying to escape a moving car.

I made one more effort to find a small boy, and this led to less serious complications, but typical in another area of the ways of the Yishuv. One day in Ramat Johanan my enquiry produced an English-talking child who had recently come with his mother from South Africa. He had spindly legs, a huge head, overbright eyes, and was tiny and filled with life energy—he was the find! But Tuvia's mother hesitated about exposing the child to the psychological dangers of becoming a special



person, a movie star, even though in the national interest. We went to an analyst for advice. Elaborate plans were made for psychological safeguards. At last the mother felt reassured. But now the consent of the child's teacher had to be obtained, in the kibbutz. The teacher called a meeting of the settlement's school committee, and the question was debated all night long. The script was scrutinized. After a few days for consideration, there was victory. But after the committee's consent, the matter had to come before a general meeting of the kibbutz. I waited on the lawn all one evening while the discussion took place. The colonists voted to risk Tuvia's psyche, on patriotic grounds. We rushed him before the camera.

He blinked.

We tried him without reflectors. He blinked.

I took him to an oculist in Haifa. We experimented first on ourselves, then on Tuvia, with several kinds of eyedrops. He still blinked.

At last we took him to a renowned eye-specialist in Jerusalem. I told the specialist that the whole Palestine film and practically all of Palestine's future depended on eradicating Tuvia's blink. The doctor consulted a tome on professional maladies and, under "films", found a formula used in French studios to counteract hypersensitivity to light.

I seized the formula and rushed to a drugstore. The principal ingredient was not to be found in Palestine. I sped up to the chemistry department of the Hebrew university. The head of the department studied the formula, and appointed two students to synthesize the ingredients.

The students worked hard. After a few days they informed me that a "puncture" had occured and they would have to start all over. Meanwhile Tuvia was getting restless. His mother wanted to take him back to the kibbutz. The chemists reported that the formula was turning out rather difficult; perhaps it had been printed wrong in the book. In any case, one of them was undertaking it as a research problem for next term.

We took Tuvia back to Ramat Johanan, and started shooting with Ronnie.

The production itself was a series of crises overcome by improvisation and overwork—the Palestine cure-alls. There were several sequences whose difficulties weighed upon us. We didn't know how we could film the opening scene, showing a night-landing of illegal immigrants. We put a fake scene into the mimeographed scripts, and left the real scene for the last. And we didn't know how we were going to film the scenes in the old-city synagogue, with bearded orthodox ancients, since they were sure to consider picture-making sinful. We didn't know how we would film the scenes involving Arabs, particularly in Arab villages, since hostility was increasing.

However we were in agreement that Arab and Jewish relationships would be shown as peaceful. It was unhappy that the film was finally to appear during a period of Arab violence, when the relationships we showed seemed wishful rather than possible. Yet the incidents in the film were typical of village Arab and Jewish contacts for many years, and these will be resumed, for the nature of people does not readily change.

The reaction to these scenes could in itself provide material for a treatise on what is truth and what is propaganda. If the film is to be viewed as a permanent work, then our treatment was correct, both as truth and propaganda. We showed the relationship existing between groups when there is no direct fanning of animosity. But paradoxically, what we filmed about peaceful relationships was done under conditions of strife.

Our film was to show an Arab coming and going in a kibbutz, selling bundles of reeds in exchange for gasoline. His little boy was to run off with the refugee boy, David, on the Arab's donkey. Jews and Arabs together searched for the boys. Of course such things happened in villages in normal times. But could we film them now?

And at the end, when the refugees went out to found their colony in the Negev, the Arab, Jamal, was to present them with a gift of a sheep and a ram for their new house. How much was real? How much of reality would be believed? I was present at the founding of a Negev colony when Bedouin squatting near the place welcomed the newcomers with the words, "Now the Jews have come, there will be water in this desert." Yet one could scarcely use such a scene, for it would seem altogether propagandistic.



The Mufti's Husseini gang was even then trying by terrorist methods to enforce an Arab boycott of commerce with Jews. The Mufti's emissaries were rapidly asserting their hold on the villages, if necessary through the assassination of leaders of the peace party. One read of such assassinations daily.

And from the first moment that our film was announced, this group made every effort to prevent us from filming Arabs and Jews in friendly relationships. We had announced that there would be roles for several Arabs, and we were visited by members of the Jerusalem Dramatic Society, an Arab club, who wished to participate. We cast three of them for the more important Arab roles. But the next day as we came to tea with them, they informed us in great embarrassment that much as they believed in presenting peaceful relationships, they could not risk their lives to do so. They had already been warned by the Arab Higher Committee.

We had no choice but to cast Yemenite Jews in these roles. But some of our scenes had to be filmed in Arab locations. Indeed, for our very first day of shooting we had chosen, not without a sense of meaning, a scene on the Via Dolorosa, in the Arab part of the old city. It was a complicated scene requiring camels and donkeys. There were no Jewish camel drivers; we persuaded two Arabs to come with their camels from Bethlehem. We secured our police permits for filming, managed to get the entire caravan set, and for street atmosphere, persuaded a water-carrier and several passers-by to take part. Everything was at last arranged for Scene One, Take One, when a young Arab in western clothes emerged from a shop and began chasing the participants from the street, yelling that this was a Jewish film. He soon had a circle of excited followers threatening to smash our camera.

Our water-carrier fled, the camel-drivers led their beasts away, and Crosby and his men picked up the camera just as a crowd of hoodlums hurried toward them with sticks.

Thus, our first day of shooting.

We talked it over and decided we had used the wrong tactics and timed ourselves badly. The Mufti, just then "escaped" from detention as a war criminal in Paris, was in Egypt preparing a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. All of the Arab shops in the old city were festooned with green boughs, while tough

young men went about putting the Mufti's photograph in the shop windows.

Some days later when the expectation of the Mufti's return had died away, we went back into the old city with a light camera, and working quickly and unobtrusively, obtained all our scenes. People willingly took part, so long as there was no one to frighten them.

The most formidable of the Arab sequences was the one in which the boy had to carry a newly born donkey through the streets of an Arab village, to Jamal's house. The filming of this sequence presented real difficulty. First, there was the traditional primitive fear of the Arab villagers before the evil eye of the camera. Second, was the probability that any village advised of our intentions would be ordered to refuse co-operation.

At this time we were working near the Sea of Galilee, mostly at the settlement of Afikim. Just across the Jordan from Afikim was one of the most picturesque Arab villages in Palestine; there were clusters of palms by the river's edge, and adobe huts forming a pyramid up the hillside.

Each Jewish settlement has a specialist on Arab relations, and I asked the Afikim specialist about the neighboring village. Relations were good, Gidon told me; he was in fact expecting a visit from the sheikh's son that very evening, on a business matter.

When the young Arab appeared, Gidon casually brought up the subject of the film. The matter was arranged. There would be a gift of a sheep or two for a feast. We could have the full liberty of the village, and we would also be able to stage a scene in the sheikh's courtyard.

Early the following morning we started to work in the village. For a few hours all went well. Three elderly Arabs on beautiful steeds thundered proudly through the scene, repeating the action for us as often as we wished. Children and young men obligingly lounged in the background, and even though the photographing of women was a most delicate matter, we succeeded in keeping a few women quite naturally in camera range.

Then as we reached the center of the village, a young man burst out of the one-room schoolhouse and began a vehement



oration. He was the new schoolteacher, recently put in by the Husseinis, Gidon informed us. He was trying to rouse the population against us.

We continued to work. For a while the people seemed indifferent. But soon we began to feel unwelcome. There were dark looks. Wherever the camera was set up, people disappeared from the lanes.

We managed to complete the streetscene, and hurried down to the sheikh's house, where we had left equipment for the courtyard scene. A Packard was standing before his gate, and as we arrived several important-looking Arabs were leaving. The sheikh received us with courtesy. But as for filming, that was now out of the question. We managed our courtyard scene elsewhere, in a wayside Arab farm.

What, then, was the truth? I still believe that what we showed on the screen was the essential truth of the relationship of the two peoples, though it had to be filmed under opposite circumstances.

Indeed, in the smallest acts of daily life in that period in Palestine, every effort seemed to be bent on creating strife. Once, for instance, in travelling to a Jewish settlement, we found the Arab Legion camped across the road. The legionnaires kept their tommyguns trained on us as they minutely checked the car, even opening the hood, and a hundred yards further on the same road, at the exit from their camp, they repeated the complete search, although the second set of guards saw us coming directly from the first. We could imagine the friction this created with Jewish colonists, who had to pass on this road all day long.

And through the whole year the provocations of the Arab Legion in Palestine increased. The Legion was a Trans-Jordan force, ostensibly in the Holy Land, as the British explained, to help maintain order. But the Jews of Palestine knew well that it was there for the day not far off, when Trans-Jordan might try to annex Palestine.

It was at this time that the British proclaimed Abdullah King of Trans-Jordan. All the foreign press were invited to the event, with promises of colorful doings and feasts.

The world of course reads of kings and potentates, accepting their titles for power. Few people ask themselves, king of what?

from where? Abdullah was the son of the Sheriff of Mecca, and a foreigner to Trans-Jordan. But Lawrence of Arabia had promised to make this family reign over all the Arab lands, and this bit of promise was being kept; in an area twice the size of Palestine, with half as many inhabitants, the Emir was being made King, and the British had fixed up for him a modern little Legion.

To the Jews of Palestine the indications were all too clear. Soon now, probably in a year when the British Mandate expired, there would be an attempt to make Abdullah King of Palestine, too. The British, in their own way, would agree with the Revisionists that Palestine and Trans-Jordan should be one country. But an Arab country.

And then there would be war. Some said Abdullah himself was less ambitious than his British advisers, and would be content with the Arab region around Hebron.

Yes, it was all seen then. And if it was to come out that way, and was already seen, why did there have to be people killed in a war?

But we were making a movie.

And though the problem of filming Arab life was most acute, we had almost as much difficulty in filming the Jewish life of the old city. I went to see the "mayor" of the community, Reb Weingarten, in his home on a little street in the ancient Jewish quarter, where his family had resided for generations. First, I asked if I could visit the old synagogues. His eye lighted as he told me about the oldest of all, which was named after a great mystic rabbi, the Ohr Chayim—the Living Light.

I recognized the name of the rabbi whose prayers were almost powerful enough to bring the Messiah down from heaven before his appointed time. I recalled, from my Chassidic legends, how the Baal Shem had sought to come to Jerusalem to unite his prayers with those of the Ohr Chayim, for together they would surely have prevailed upon the Messiah to come down and end his people's suffering.

And as we touched upon Chassidic lore, Reb Weingarten looked at me curiously. How was it than an irreligious American knew of these tales?

For two hours we exchanged Chassidic legends. Then he led me down to the little house of prayer, for it had been in the



custody of his family as long as he could remember. We went first down a stone stairway that clung to the walls of the ancient house, circling down as though in a wellshaft that reached into the heart of the hill. At the bottom we crossed a tiny courtyard: old cracked doors opened into a small vaulted room, with arched windows cut high in the thick walls.

There was space only for a study table, a few benches, and a Torah alcove. Ornamental candelabra hung from the high ceiling; a few oil lamps burned. It was a beautiful and perfect place, but too sacred, he said, to be filmed. Reb Weingarten led me to another lane where five crypt-like synagogues centered on a small courtyard. In the floor of one was an opening to a subterranean reservoir, from the days of King David, perhaps, and a woman knelt there, even as in those ancient times, drawing up a bucket of water, filling a jar.

The filming was arranged. And on the day of the filming, the graybeards came, for Reb Weingarten had seen to that, too. What we photographed exists no more, for the entire quarter was destroyed, razed by the Legion's guns, in the war for Jerusalem.

I was to follow the battle in Paris, where I was completing another Jewish film a year later. I read of the Arab's advance, street by street, and of the last stand in each synagogue, and read finally that only part of one street remained, with a few score fighters without munitions, and a few score civilians without food and water. Then I read of a Reb Weingarten who went forward with his daughter to surrender the smashed and battered remains of the Jewish quarter of the old city to the Arabs. And I wondered what had happened to that ancient house of study of the Ohr Chayim, and to the ancient Torah that was there.

Perhaps the only permanent trace of those narrow streets, those generation-laden dwellings is in what we filmed.

One week we were installed on Mount Scopas, opposite Jerusalem, to film one of the most tenuous sequences in the story, an intense dialogue in which the girl reveals that she accepted whoredom with Nazis in order to survive.

This was the site I had dreamed of putting into a film, since the opening of the University in 1925. With the awesome

wilderness of Judea framed in the amphitheater colonnade, and stone-white Jerusalem framed in the library arches on the opposite side of the hill, the university site seemed to me to be one of the few places in the world where physical beauty attains a metaphysical force.

We had made a good start on the scene, and returned to our Jerusalem headquarters for lunch. Our office was in a dead-end lane diagonally opposite the King David Hotel. I went off on an errand, leaving Kline, Crosby, our leading actors and half the crew in the office. A moment later the entire city shook. I turned to see a tremendous column of flame rising above and around the King David Hotel, and a wall collapsing within the flame. I ran back to the office.

The blast of the explosion had blown in the door and shattered the windows. Ben Oyserman, one of the cameramen, was standing in the doorway filming the burning British headquarters. Miraculously, none of our people had been hurt. But our friend Dick Mowrer of the *New York Post* was lying with a smashed leg on the street. He had just come out of the King David.

It was the same scene as always, after the buzz bombs, after the blockbusters, the day and night digging, the bodies identifiable and unidentifiable, the escapees with glazed eyes. What could be said of it? Terrorism is never haulted by disapprobation; it is practically never halted by force. It grows out of deepest social injustice, and it vanishes of itself when the injustice is corrected.

We believed in targets that were comprehensible—an airfield, from which planes took off to spot refugee ships; a prison ship, that carried immigrants to Cyprus. But if you fight the spotter planes, then why not the headquarters that sends them out? If you fight the Mobile Police, why not the top leaders who use them?

And if, in attacking the leaders, you kill a hundred innocent people? Kill some of the best Jews, some of the best Arabs, some of the best English?

No, we thought it was a terrible mistake, and costliest to us, for now the British soldiers themselves, and their people at home, turned against us. One could no longer remind them of the provocations that had been suffered by our people. One British life lost in a terrorist action counted more with them,



quite naturally, than any number of Jews burned in Auschwitz because the British had prohibited them from entering Palestine while there was yet time to escape Europe.

We tried, still, to address ourselves to them, to explain ourselves to them, and my OWI psychological warfare training came finally to a little use as I helped in writing Haganah leaflets addressed to the British troops. But could anyone expect a man whose buddy had been blown up in the King David to listen to words of reason?

There are many today who believe that only the terror drove the British out of Palestine, ignoring completely the effect of the nation-wide resistance, and the world-wide force of public opinion. Certainly the terrorist acts goaded some of the British to advocate pulling out, others were goaded only to more stubborn reprisals. Many of us felt anger and bitterness toward the terrorists, whose acts seemed to detract from the moral issue, but there was also the double-edged pain of feeling their feelings, the same feelings that had driven them to their action.

In our own company we could hear the youngsters amongst the crew and actors discussing all this as they sat in the back of the truck on the way to location. Cooly, Saadia would say, Do you want to join the Etzel? just as kids in Chicago might say How about joining the scouts?—You have to be available only two nights a week. You can join and be a paid fighter, or join and not be paid...

And we felt how it tugged them, especially the young.

We could do nothing but continue our work. As soon as traffic was reopened, we returned to Mount Scopas. Still shaken from the explosion, Irene Broza and Peter Danziger went on with the tender scene of the Auschwitz survivor's confession.

Despite all of our special passes and police clearances, we were stopped at least twice a day by roaming officers who decided that the whole movie setup with the cameras and actors was camouflage : they had located the secret Haganah broadcasting station. So we would halt production while they checked with their headquarters, and sometimes the chief who knew about us would be there, otherwise everything would wait... And then one day the British started picking up men of the Palmach,

and half of our cast had to be hidden around at different places every night.... And then the terrorists stopped a truck for use on one of their jobs, and it happened to be our truck, and afterward our driver, who like everyone else in the crew acted in the film, was picked up and jailed as a suspected terrorist. We finally managed to get the truck and the driver back into the production, but now one of the actors borrowed from a kibbutz wanted to go back to plant the hay, as he was the settlement's crop expert, and we had to get the Jewish Agency to order him to stay in the film, and then the leading man got appendicitis and had to be operated, and Kline got his malarial attacks, and the assistant sound engineer caught malaria at Afikim, and a crewman broke his ankle, and a telephone fell on the nose of the second leading lady.

I had written into the script the overnight construction of a settlement. All through those months the Negev was uppermost in Yishuv discussion. Rumors had it that new colonies were about to be established; something big was going to happen. We begged the Agency to notify us in time.

One night as we were filming the hora dance on Mount Scopas, Chayim Bendor took me aside. His cousin, in one of the shock groups, had been alerted. The Negev operation could happen tomorrow.

And so it was. Columns of trucks loaded with young pioneers, with building materials, churned across the desert. In one swift move, a dozen colonies were set up, all in a single day.

We rushed to catch the stream of vehicles heading into the desert. All the way, the youngsters sang, without once repeating a tune. Azaria Rappaport and Chayim Bendor and Ada and Naomi, and when we came to the sandy wasteland where the truck convoys were already unloaded, our youngsters pitched in to help with the building; they couldn't be told from any of the others for after all they were cousins and schoolmates and fellow pioneers.

The rest of the company arrived later, and there was a big tent assigned to us; we all slept under it on blankets on the sand, crewmen and cameramen and actors and directors, child actors and old men; for two days in the Negev as at other times in



Tiberius or even in the broiling atmosphere of the Dead Sea, the spirit was good: we felt we were doing something good, useful, we felt we were good people.

At night there was someone with a mouth organ, and the film kids were in a circle with the kids of the colony, dancing a hora, and some of us went a few yards outside the barbed-wire fence and sat with some Arabs there, and had ceremonial coffee with them.

The place was named Nirim, and was much in the news two years later when the Egyptians came, for then the barbed wire and the perimeter dugouts and the sandbags we filmed became objects of reality, and the young pioneers we filmed as they built Nirim held out for days and weeks; ten were killed there, but they drove off the Egyptians. They slew many, and their colony never fell, but became the anchor of the counterattack that drove the Egyptians out of Israel.

The raising of the settlement was the end of our story, but the beginning had not yet been done—the illegal landing. We drove up and down the length of the coast, studying the shore as though we were planning a D-Day. There had been a hint from a friendly official not to try any illegal scenes. And in the face of the intense watch for illegal vessels, it seemed impossible and even dangerous to stage such a scene.

At last we hit on a plan. There was the settlement of Ein Gev on the far side of the Sea of Galilee. In a night scene it would be impossible to tell the lake from the Mediterranean.

And so we set up at Ein Gev. Their fishing boats could serve as landing craft. The colonists well knew the look of refugees; we split them into two groups of extras—refugees, to swell our cast, and the landing party.

All night long, they were jumping into the water, hauling the boats into camera-line. Half the cast caught cold. Ronnie dropped from exhaustion.

It was done. After half a year, the story was on film.

But perhaps because of the incredible practical difficulties that had beset us, perhaps because of the very real divergence in point of view that had developed between Kline and myself, I

felt that the essence of the story had not been expressed, and that I would have to put it into a novel.

In the summer of 1947, both book and film were ready. The project had taken two years. I had sold half my parcel of land in Nathanyah to help finance the production.

The result seemed to me worth while, even though it fell short of the possibilities. An audience reacts to what it sees: it doesn't consciously miss what might have been there. Parts of the film were beautiful. People who had no particular sentiment toward Palestine were intrigued by the film, while people with a background of emotion for the subject were deeply moved, sometimes overwhelmed. As a first production effort in Palestine it was far from a failure, if only for the remarkable translation of the country onto film, if only for the faces of the people.

* * *

I had little time to realize what this work had meant to me. Only vaguely I knew that what I had expressed in the film, the father-search, was not only the child's story, and the story of the survivors, but my own story. Vaguely, I knew that I was terribly haunted by the story of the little boy in Haifa, Robert, and his strange relationship to being a Jew, because the Arab boys with their knives lying for him in the tunnels were the Italian kids with knives lying await for me in the alleys of Chicago.

In my scenario I had resolved all this through a device, through rebirth and the finding of a stone that perhaps could never have been there. Was my own stone there? Was my own stone still to be found?

I was still haunted by the other film I had intended to make, before *My Father's House*. Instead of six months, two years had gone by, and still the Jews were creeping over the borders of Poland and Hungary, and still the illegal ships were crossing the Mediterranean and being stopped by the British, sometimes in bloody battle.



It seemed to me that under our very noses, in our own time, there was an exodus as difficult and stirring as the first exodus was from Egypt. How could it be left unrecorded? Suppose there had been cameras in the time of Moses, and it had been neglected to film the exodus?

And so I began haunting the organizations, begging them to arrange for me to film Aliyah Beth, Immigration B, as the illegal way was called. For me, inwardly, this would round out a self-imposed task, it would somehow complete my war job. And in that other search, for a source, for my own stone, I wanted to reach Poland; I would begin the film there, in the source-land of European Jewry. I had to go there, to touch Poland before I was free. Perhaps, too, I had to re-enact for myself the exodus. Then my own journey would be rounded and complete.

There was a newly formed organization which was to bring the Haganah for the first time into the open in the United States, and it was finally decided that I should film the exodus under their sponsorship. I was to draw up to twenty-five thousand dollars to cover expenses; my own services were donated.

I borrowed a German war-camera, an Arriflex, from some friends, who also loaned me their company name, Film Documents. From some ex-OWI film-makers, I scrounged a camera platform, which I shipped off on a Dodge station wagon.

In Paris, I had a telephone number for a Haganah contact named Venya. He came to the hotel. Venya was a young family man from Ramat Rachel, one of the men I had seen dragged across the yard by the British, not so long ago. He agreed to provide me with a contact in each country along the route of the Brayha—the Escape. As for entering and filming in those countries—I'd have to work that out for myself.

The problem then was to film an illegal activity in many countries, beginning behind the iron curtain; much of what we had to film took place at night, of course under complete blackout. At the end there would be the passage of an illegal ship, and we would somehow have to keep our negative out of the hands of the British who would most probably capture the ship.

I planned to introduce a story element flexible enough to be fitted in with any real movement of the refugee groups. There

would be a young couple, married in the camps somewhere since the war, and returning to Poland to see if they could live there again. As the young wife became pregnant, they would decide that their child had to be born in Palestine. I would follow them along the route, perhaps have them separated at a border where the young man might be caught, on lookout. Thus I would have the suspense of their separation, and the time limit of the child's birth, as dramatic elements while I followed the fate of each through camps in Europe until they met again on the boat. After that, whatever actually happened would be incorporated into the film.

I would avoid stressing the story, and keep the characters out of the foreground, integrating them with the movement of the unidentified mass.

The simple tale, I felt, told the story of all the remaining Jews of Europe. I had seen it, I was to see it, to hear it a thousand times on the voyage. The bits of dialogue in the film were echoes of dialogue from a dozen prospective mothers, young fathers. "A child?... not here."

And the urge to arrive in time for the birth of the child in Eretz was real on every vessel that left for Palestine with its host of pregnant women, some of whom were smuggled onto the ships in their ninth month despite the Haganah regulation making the seventh month the limit.

Obviously, the elements of the story were so actual that I could improvise scenes all along the way; they would melt into the whole, so long as they came from truth.

I needed only two actors to make the voyage; the girl would be Tereska, my fiancée, who had been waiting for me in Paris.

We looked around for a suitable young man. In the suburb of Jouy-en-Josas was a Jewish war orphanage directed by Tereska's friends, the Kaufmans. Their singing-and-gymnastics instructor was sturdy, determined looking, and eager to travel to Poland to visit his native village. His name was Yankel Mikalowitch.

Mika had come to France with his parents at the age of ten; during the war he had eluded the concentration camps by a combination of false papers, luck, swift legs, and finally in the maquis. Once he had actually been caught in a roundup and penned with future deportees. He had managed to escape; in



his schooldays he had been a champion sprinter. Mika was all the actor I needed.

The next problem was a cameraman. My old OWI production chief, Monty, was in Paris, and he recommended a Belgian who had braved the rigors of a Congo film expedition.

We had already embarked on the visa hunt, which was in many ways to prove the most arduous part of the entire project. We would have to film in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Austria; our ship might leave from Roumania, Bulgaria, Italy or France. We filled in applications for all countries. At the Roumanian consulate the clerks regarded us with astonishment—they didn't even have visa application forms.

And as if the normal handicaps were insufficient, it turned out that our group of five had five different nationalities—American, Canadian, French, Belgian—and Mika, alas, had only his Polish papers. In most consulates in the Europe of today the sight of this assortment of passports brought hoots of unbelief. And on top of all this was the mention of film equipment, for it was futile to hope that we could hide our material on so complex and extensive a journey. The mention of a camera of course was a magic formula for raising barriers. What did I intend to film?

I needed a plausible and innocent subject as a cloak, and put down that I wanted to film the situation of the Jews in Europe. I secured letters of recommendation from Joseph Schwartz, director of the American Joint Distribution Committee, and from Moshe Shertok.

There was of course nothing reprehensible in our project, and I am certain that no one will deny its historic value. I wanted to film a movement known to hundreds of government and military men, tolerated, expedited. In the unwritten laws of journalism I had a right to carry out my task even if it was to record an unlawful activity. This, I felt, justified a certain latitude in my representations as I went from consulate to consulate.

The most complex and difficult negotiations had to do with filming in the military zones of occupation in Germany and Austria. When I deposited our batch of passports in the Allied headquarters, the secretary looked at Mika's black-covered Polish documents and shuddered. "The lieutenant sees red when he sees those." Weeks passed; we had no permits to enter Ger-

many. Finally I got in touch with Judge Levinthal, the American Adviser on Jewish Affairs, in Frankfort; it turned out he had once read a book of mine, and he was most helpful. But still we waited.

The Poles, we had been told, would be hopeless. But Tereska had a contact to the cultural attaché in Paris. The Polish Government was sensitive on the Jewish question, and had acted with remarkable vigor and eagerness to make whatever amends could be made to the small remaining population. Our applications were sent to Warsaw. We waited.

I began to feel like a Kafka hero, butting endlessly against cotton-padded walls, driven by some inner need to penetrate the unknown.

We had received the Czech visas but if we didn't soon get the Polish visas the Czech visas would expire and by the time we got new ones the limit on our Hungarian visas would be reached and we had no German permits and in the meantime Venya in Paris told me there would be a big movement out of Munich in a few days, we ought to film it. It would be a semilegal movement he explained with his pleased inflection; a double movement by train and truck.

I would have preferred to start in Poland and follow the route step by step, but the Aliyah could scarcely be adjusted to the needs of our film. But even to get to Munich, we needed our military permits. There was only one way—to get transit visas through Germany on the basis of our Czech visas, and stop in Munich en route. Thus, we were catching on to the combinations.

We set out, overloaded, with our cases of film stock in a little French trailer. Twice the first night the trailer tires blew. The second time, we were enveloped in a dense mist, far from habitation. We sat all night in the car. As in Palestine, our venture had started poorly.

But finally I was back on the roads I had travelled with the Fourth Armored Division, back at last to do the job that had been crying out in me to be done, ever since I had left the two typhus-ridden Jews straying in the snow and mist of the last redoubt.

Venya had given me a note scribbled in Hebrew to Ernst, the



Brayha chief in Munich. All through Europe it was to be like that—a word or two on a scrap of paper, or just a verbal contact, "See Amos, he'll arrange everything." Beside each Ernst, each Amos, there was a telephone, and all across Europe the Brayha operated in a very simple code—Hebrew. Presumably, a few Hebrew-speaking controls at Europe's central switchboards could have supplied full information about the illegal movement of refugees.

There was a street in Munich that had become the postwar capital for the Jews of Europe. Mohlstrasse somewhat resembled a wartime division headquarters, consisting of a series of requisitioned residences now turned into combination offices and living quarters for various organizations. There was the ORT, the AJDC, the Jewish Agency, the Central Committee of Jewish Refugees—and the street itself was filled with wanderers from all over Europe, on their confused searches. In every doorway trading went on, while behind one building there was a veritable marketplace, with stands where the "established" DP's sold everything from bread to cameras.

We found Ernst in a back bedroom on the second floor of the Jewish Agency house. At his bedside was the telephone. With Ernst was an innocuous looking, chubby little man named Ephraim. We were to meet Ephraim everywhere—on the stairs of the Jewish community headquarters in Prague, at a Brayha truck station in Vienna, in an office in Paris, and he was always hurrying off—to Marseilles, Rome, Munich, Bratislava. For Ephraim was the Brayha. He carried in his head all the financial accounts, in a dozen different constantly shifting currency values; he knew last night's population of every Brayha station, every camp.

I often wondered how this man managed to flit around Europe, passing through the iron curtain as though it were gauze, and going in and out of the military zones with the ease of a general. Once Ephraim showed me his credentials. He was in Europe as a representative of the Volunteer Fire Brigade of Haifa!

Only another Jew from Palestine could know that the Volunteer Fire Brigade, composed mostly of family men of the Hadar HaCarmel, was a Haganah center. Ephraim was supposedly in Europe studying municipal fire-prevention methods.

There was indeed a big movement scheduled from Munich, Ernst informed me. DP's were being assembled from all the camps, to leave for France. We could go out that same night and watch the first phase of the movement at the Austrian zone border, as a contingent would be brought into Germany illegally, for the assembly in Munich.

Ernst sent a guide with us—Yitzhak the Yugoslav, a handsome, loquacious lad who had "been in the Brayha even before it was the Brayha", for he had been moving Jews out of Europe since the war.

We got into the Austrian zone easily enough by virtue of our American papers and car. In Salzberg, Yitzhak guided us to a ramshackle house on the edge of the city, operated officially as a small DP camp. In the yard were a half-dozen GMC trucks with large white lettering on the bumpers reading GHQ, with a jumble of numbers and important-looking symbols.

This was a Brayha, for the word was used for each unit as well as for the whole movement. The little DP camp housed a trucking unit of the underground railway. The drivers were tough, half-wild DP's who climbed out of their army cots several nights a week to make clandestine trips over side roads, carrying truckloads of men, women, and children as far as the zone border. The refugees were then walked across the border, to be picked up by trucks on the other side and taken to another DP camp where they would wait until there was opportunity to move them on the next stage of the journey.

The movement we saw that night was typical for every movement across Europe. The technique depended on bluff and complaisance and sometimes pure nerve; it had been born out of necessity and perfected in two years of operation.

At midnight the movement began. The trucks rolled across Salzberg to a huge DP camp on the other side of the city; there, the passengers were waiting.

They were transients, lodged for a few days in a "permanent" camp, a one-time army camp made up of the usual rows of barracks. Again, I was reminded of a kibbutz, for there was the central watch-tower and a large messhall like a chedarochel. And over the door of this building hung a sign in Hebrew—Baruch Ha-Baim. Literally, Blessed be those who come here.



Within, was an astonishing sight. A few hundred people were sprawled on the floor, as though poured out of a dump truck. They lay in little family groups, or singly. Some stirred, tired and sleepless. A man lay under a table, his head on his knapsack: some lay curled around their suitcases: some lay on the tables, on the benches, others sat against the wall. There a mother sat with her three children gathered around her, asleep, the youngest babe hugging a sleeping cat. The room was filled with the tired bawling and whimpering of babies and very young children, the shushing and sometimes exhausted snapping cries of the mothers. These were the people who waited to make the nocturnal journey.

The preparations were long and tiresome; the whole apparatus seemed to move like someone infinitely weary and over-burdened. At last however a lad in a zipper-jacket climbed onto a bench by the doorway, and began to call out names from some lists in his hand. But the people scarcely heeded the order of the names. All now crowded to the doorway with sudden eagerness and energy, as though they were stepping directly through a gate to Tel Aviv. In turn, the trucks backed up to the opening, and the people clambered aboard.

Though Yitzhak explained to me that their heavier belongings were forwarded by other trucks, every one of the refugees was bebundled and behung, carrying rucksacks, valises, bags, packages. Once more they were admonished to take only the lightest personal essentials, to turn the rest over to the baggage convoy. But it was easily understandable how, drifting in these uncertain nightmarish stages at intervals of weeks, days, sometimes months, a refugee would have a terror of letting the smallest possession out of his immediate sight, out of his hands. They pushed onto the trucks, doubled under their huge knapsacks, their arms loaded. And some of the women had infants slung from their necks in kerchief-cradles.

We mounted.

For a time the trucks rode on the autobahn. Then they switched off their lights and took a sideroad. It was like wartime driving now, in blackout, with a fear of the unknown; only instead of a fear of blundering into the enemy, we were afraid of running into American MP's.

At last the trucks halted. We were on a little road in the

woods. The people were hurried off the vehicles and formed into line. "You won't be able to see even the person in front of you—hold onto each other," the guide admonished.

The Brayha boys stationed themselves at the head, and alongside the column.

We took our places in the file. Filming was of course out of the question. But we had to see, to know. Perhaps on another night we would be able to film the first part of the movement, the loading and departure of the trucks. And somewhere we would be able to take the same people in daylight and duplicate this walk through the forest, shooting day for night.

I would probably never be able to approximate the real thing, this I knew as we walked. For I could never reproduce the silent obedience and tension in this line of beings, this line threading in the night through the forest, with six-year-old children walking, clinging to their mothers, the children too with their bundles and burdens. I tried to lift one little boy's pack from him and he fought me as though I were a brigand, all silently. At last when he was half staggering his mother persuaded him to let me carry his pack. What world could ever be safe for a child grown out of this terror?

In the utter darkness as we came deeper into the forest it was true that one could not discern the person directly ahead; each clung to the blackness before him, stumbling onward; branches whipped our faces, one after another the same branch against the entire line of people.

A baby began to cry, and I recalled as though I had myself been there the story a survivor had once told me of a group of Jews sitting in a basement in a ghetto in a Polish town, while the Germans were making a house to house search. They heard the Germans enter the house, and down there in the hidingplace a baby began to cry, and then suddenly the baby was still. After the Germans had gone and they were for the time safe, they all looked, one at another, for the baby lay choked in his mother's lap. They couldn't look at the mother. She had two other children with her, to save.

The baby cried, and the guide ran alongside, muttering angrily "We told you not to take babies in arms." Later, I learned that all women with infants should have waited for a truck



that went by a more circuitous route, carrying mothers and babies across the border at a spot that could be used only charily. But the women always feared they would be separated from their husbands. And so they slipped through with the main group, carrying their babies.

The mother clucked and rocked, and at last the baby was still. We moved on in the utter dark, feeling a small surprise each time our lifted foot touched the solid earth again.

There was a patch of thinner woods, where we could once more make out shapes. Before me was a man bent double, gasping, stumbling under a tremendous pack; even in the dim light I could see his face sweatcovered as he desperately dragged himself onward, with all his possessions. Then I saw the woman with the three children; she was carrying the youngest, and the two tots clung to her sides so that the whole group of them made a strange monumental form in movement through the forest.

In that moment an anguished hatred arose in me, pure bile and bitterness against the entire world, the whole rotten putrid human race that could drive its own beings into this. What were these people? They were just any people from anywhere, just a number of families and splinters of families scooped up from St. Louis Avenue in Chicago as well as from Jassy and Bucharest and Wrotzlaw, they were the same little launderers and grocery store keepers and machinists and peddlers and peddlers' wives. Why were they crawling here through this forest with their children, not even knowing what border they were crossing—why? And what border was it? A zone border. From one American military zone of occupation into another American military zone of occupation. With the same stealth and fear as from Poland into Czecho-Slovakia, from Hungary into Austria. What cursed stupid world could cause such fruitless, inexcusable indignity! And how many times had they walked through border forests, and how many times had they yet to do it? These very same people, crawling across Europe, patiently, without rage!

Tereska was walking alongside a shrunken little woman huddled in many sweaters, who kept moaning, "Where is my husband, maybe he got lost altogether—" for they had been separated some ways back in the darkness.

We came out of the woods into a field. The guide halted the

group. This field was the actual border. He took little sections across, half-crouched, running.

Then there was a woods again. For some moments we walked with tension relaxed. We were on the other side. But suddenly the column was halted. A guide came running the entire length of the line, motioning for the people to turn around and head in the reverse direction. The people began to move, mutely, dismayed, frightened. Were they going all the way back? But then the column moved at an angle, deeper into the woods.

I caught up with one of the guides. "What is it? See somebody?"

"Nothing," he whispered. "We missed the turn here. In the dark, we sometimes get confused ourselves. Though I've done it three times a week."

I walked for a little while with Tereska. She had taken the pack of the woman in all the sweaters, who was breathing heavily, more alarmed than ever, certain her husband was lost.

André, our cameraman, was just behind us, striding easily.

We crossed a dirt road. The guides led the group into a clearing. We made out the forms of several large trucks, like those that had been used on the other side. The people gathered by the trucks.

There was a little boy, no older than my own son in America. This child was wearing east-European cap and boots; he had a canteen and blanket slung around him. "Mama, my feet are cold even in the boots," he said. "Is it still far to go to Eretz Israel? I wish I were there already."

The trucks carried us to another ex-army camp, this time in Germany. There was no assembly hall here, only a barrack into which scarcely a third of the people could crowd. The rest huddled in the corridor, or remained outside in the cold.

We wondered why someone couldn't at least have arranged for something hot to drink for the people at the end of their weary trek, but it was like that. Most of the people had bits of provisions with them, and those who weren't too tired opened their sacks and their packets, and ate. The others fell asleep where they were.

Yitzhak took us to the drivers' quarters. There were no extra cots. Some of us stretched out on the floor. André paced.

At dawn we drove back in the truck to Salzburg, and I



hurried to a military hotel and secured a room for my cameraman. But at lunch he said we would have to have a serious talk. He was concerned for my attitude about this film; he didn't think I could work with the necessary objectivity. "For you this is not a film project," he declared, including Tereska in his glance, "this is a pilgrimage."

I recalled that we had been holding hands as we walked through the woods in front of him.

André agreed to complete this trip, filming the convoy into France. Then we would have to hunt up another cameraman and begin the visa chain all over again. Someone who would film a pilgrimage.

On the following night another group was to pass the same border. We returned to the starting camp and persuaded the Brayha leader to let us use lights and film the vast room with the waiting refugees sprawled on the floor, huddled against the wall. He would also let us film the departure of the trucks.

As a precaution, I stopped in to see the army commander of the camp. He was a sergeant, middle-aged, bored and a little bewildered at being in charge of these thousands of Jews. Oh, they gave no trouble, he said, it was a model camp, they ran their own affairs, they were clean. But he was lonesome for an American voice and insisted that I sit drinking beer with him.

Then the sergeant unburdened himself. He had got himself a nice girl here in this camp, nice little woman, all he did was take her to dance at the service club the other night. But what happens? The camp committee gets after the little woman and forbids her going out with him. Why is that? Why are these people so high and mighty?

I had to smile inwardly at the curious form of this recurrence of the tale of the gentile ruler and the daughters of Israel. I wondered in what myriad forms and circumstances this tale had been repeated, through the centuries, and I imagined the community elders of the time of Esther disputing, and at last giving in, deciding that for the sake of the people the girl had to be sent to lie with King Ahasuerus. And I imagined the angry tumultuous little committee here at camp Bialik, disputing whether a DP from Roumania should be permitted to go on dates with this

Sergeant Ahasuerus, and this time they had decided no, for in the end such relations always became troublesome.

I sympathized with the sergeant: and at last there was no more beer, and I hurried off to set up my lights. The lot of electrician had fallen had to me, though I was always clumsy with wiring. With two-hundred-twenty volt wiring, one-hundred-ten volt bulbs had to be used in pairs; this required some hasty re-wiring at times, and I had already blown one bulb in struggling with the task when a self-effacing little man asked whisperingly whether he could help, saying he was an electrician. He showed me a simple way to combine the contacts. All evening long he worked with us, anticipating every need, moving the lights as the camera moved, improvising, making-do, and managing to keep the lights from being upset by the excited, churning refugees. As we filmed the people mounting the trucks our meagre equipment had to serve in three or four ways at once—it was a task for a half-dozen helpers, and he pressed men into his service, showed them in a second how to aim the lights properly, leaping from one to another, training the beams like a long-experienced head-electrician in a studio. When we were done he wound up the cables professionally, and disassembled the spots, putting them wistfully away.

Here he had rotted for a year and a half, living with his wife and two children in a curtain-partitioned room shared with two other families. His wife was sickly and feared the uncertainty of the Brayha route. So they were waiting. The habits of idleness had webbed over him. "Do you think they need electricians, there?" he asked with the same secretive whisper.

I said the whole country ran on electricity, that vast hydro-electric projects were in prospect, that electricians would be like gods in the land. "We'll go," he whispered. "Soon, we'll go."

The sergeant watched complacently as we filmed the departure of the trucks. He of course knew that the movement was not regular. But he let them run their own affairs: some came, some went, the camp total was about the same. They all looked alike to him.

Only, they might have been decent enough to let him have the girl.



We returned in the morning for a general view of the camp; a C.I.C. man was there talking to the sergeant. Where was our permit to film?

I wondered whether this was because I hadn't got the girl for Ahasuerus. We were held. For a couple of hours I sweated in the public relations office in Salzburg. The officer put through a call to Vienna. It turned out fortunately that the film control chief had known me in Hollywood. The first arrest had been easy.

In Munich the mass of refugees were being assembled in a transient barracks on the outskirts of the city, to be moved in a "legal" IRO train to France. We went to the barracks. A thousand transients were accomodated in two huge lofts. They became "legal" as they arrived there, for the Brahya workers of Munich had a group visa waiting for them. Such visas were issued periodically by the French; officially, the refugees were in transit to some South American republic. Actually everyone knew they were destined for Palestine.

A list of names was required for each group visa. The Amoses and Ernsts simply invented names as they were needed. When the refugees arrived in Munich the names were parcelled out to them, each receiving a little identity card that had been fixed up in conformity with a name on the visa. All the refugees had to do was to learn their new names. Still, it was wonderful to have some sort of paper in their hands.

In the morning they were taken to a railroad siding where a boxcar train was waiting. IRO officials, social workers from the AJDC, and uniformed Jewish Agency workers walked along the tracks, watching the results of their labor as the families clambered aboard. Several of these organizational officials were actually in the Brayha.

In each freight car was a little stove and a pail and a jerrycan of water. A worker from the AJDC assured me, Oh, they'll fix themselves up comfortably enough, with their blankets and their coats and their bundles, don't worry, they're used to it, they know how to make themselves comfortable.

It was true that not many of these same people had memories of boxcar transports. For those who had been taken to Auschwitz

in such cars were for the most part dead. Those who had been shunted over Europe from one slave camp to another, and had survived, had been among the first to take the route to Palestine, and were gone. Most of this batch were recent arrivals from Roumania.

And even if one remembered these boxcars, it had to be admitted that the IRO was far more humane than the gestapo. There were the little stoves; and only twenty or thirty people were put into a car—there was room enough for everyone to lie down, if the people fitted themselves carefully. Besides, there was no risk. They were leaving the dark countries at last.

As soon as the train was on its way, Ernst walked to his car, talking intently in Hebrew with a diminutive woman in uniform, named Miriam. They had a tougher transport to arrange for tomorrow.

For the next day an equally large number of refugees were being sent by truck. They were being assembled at a camp some fifty miles from Munich.

It was a camp like all the others, an ex-wehrmacht barracks, this one of brick two-story buildings. A large number of permanent residents of the camp were being moved out together with the transients who had been assembled in a shed for the big convoy. As night fell, the movement was ready.

It was indeed something to watch, a triumph of organization, in contrast to the days just after the war when the Brayha moved people in a vehicle or two borrowed from the Jewish Brigade. For now there was a column of sixty trucks, practically a full battalion. The vehicles lined up in orderly series on the road, complete with side-runners ou motorcycles, and with emergency gas and supply trailers.

Where had the Brayha obtained so many trucks? Ernst shrugged. They were hired from a German trucking company. Why not?

This movement too had all the appearance of legality. There was a lead jeep, with uniformed officials.

We reached the first checkpoint dividing the American and the French zones of occupation. Ernst walked into the MP hut and laid down his group visa, an imposing document with pages



of names, sealed and rubberstamped and signed. In a few moments the barrier was lifted, and the trucks rolled into the little area between the two border-posts. They halted before the French barrier, while we went into the requisitioned farmhouse that served as the French station. An officer examined the documents. Yes, he said, everything appeared to be in order, but how was it that he had not been notified that there would be a movement of refugees, particularly so large a movement? He would have to check with his chief.

It was then about eleven at night. There was ice on the roads.

The telephoning began. I went out and walked along the line of vehicles. In the lead jeep the Brayha boys were talking hurriedly, anxiously. Along the line of trucks, Miriam moved, reassuring the DP's. The people could be dimly seen in the backs of the trucks, huddling together for warmth.

I talked with Yitzhak the Yugoslav. Did he think there was any real difficulty? Would we have to remain here long?

Yitzhak was disdainful of "those Palestinians" and their arrangements. All this was child's play now, he said. Money to hire sixty trucks. Everything organized, with papers, with connections higher up. If he were doing it, like in the old days, he would simply burst right through the barrier, and take the people through. That was how things had been done in the days just after the war, before the Palestinians came to take over the work.

Yitzhak had finished the war in the British Army, in a transport unit. There on the icy road he was ready to show me his discharge papers, by the light of a cigarette, to prove his statement. I must look at his papers, he insisted, with that peculiar expectancy of disbelief that haunts the unstable, the displaced. And right after the war he had been among the first to organize the Brayha. It could scarcely have been called an organization, then; it happened of itself. Jews found Jews. They gathered in one camp or another, in Munich, in Vienna, and they had to be hauled on their way to the Mediterranean ports. They found a Jew in some army unit, and then he got hold of a comrade in a transport unit, and they wrote out some kind of a movement order, or changed the date on an old one. Some of the units of the Jewish Brigade took up the job, and things began to flow in a kind of system. At certain camps the refugees assembled, to be packed

into small convoys of trucks, and hauled to Italy. On the movement order, the Brigade boys wrote a certain code sign—T.T.G., which had first been scribbled by a Palestinian with an ironic humor one day when the drivers asked for papers that would get them by the border. The official-looking initials stood for a phrase combined out of Arabic and Yiddish, to describe the whole operation, Telhas Tizi Gescheften, Kiss-My-Behind business, it meant, and this private Brayha joke went on for many months, as every checkpost on the roads of Europe came to know and accept the movement orders marked T.T.G.

And so, as the Brayha formed, Yitzhak the Yugoslav, also known as Yitzhak the Wild, became one of the formidable drivers. He had a love for trucks, vehicles, cars of any kind, and particularly motorcycles, and his dream vision was of himself speeding on a motorcycle, commanding a column of trucks. To this he attained, as the convoys became longer. Ten, fifteen trucks, with Yitzhak in command, on a motorcycle. Oh, a beauty, that motorcyle. Could do two hundred kilometers an hour. A big German Army job, organized for a few cartons of cigarettes.

But there was an unlucky journey, his last journey as a transport commander. And as we walked up and back by the column of trucks, beating our arms, Yitzhak told me of that other journey, so that I might understand what hardships were encountered in the real days, the tough days of the Brayha.

There had been a convoy of some dozen trucks. He had been trying to take them into Belgium, for Belgium was then admitting refugees as farm laborers, and this provided a plausible excuse for getting the people out of Germany, and on their way. But the entrance to Belgium was through the British zone. And Yitzhak was worried about having the slightest contact with the British.

Therefore he swept ahead on his motorcycle, exploring side roads, so as to circumvent the British. And just along the border of the American and British zones, he found a little backdoor road into Belgium. Yitzhak zoomed back to his column and guided the trucks into the byroad. They reached the frontier. But the guard insisted that refugees could pass only at the main post on the main road—through the British zone.

Half the night, Yitzhak raced around on his motorcycle trying



to find a way out of his dilemma. At last he decided to take the convoy back to Munich rather than risk contact with the British who might, through such a blunder, discover the whole Brayha system.

And so the convoy was turned around. But before dawn the trucks began to run out of gas. Every few minutes the convoy haulted while gas was siphoned from truck to truck, so they could crawl a little further. At every military post, Yitzhak begged for gas, offering even to pledge his motorcycle. But he was refused.

The people, dragged around a day and a night without stop for food or water, were getting restive. Once when the trucks were halted on a steep hill some of the refugees jumped down to stretch and relieve themselves. And just then the brakes of one truck slipped, and the vehicle rolled forward, starting a chain of collisions as each truck crashed into the rear of another. One of the refugees was caught between two trucks, and cut in two.

"You see," Yitzhak said, waving to our line of trucks, "it's all simple now. Extra gas trailers, everything in order. And now there is discipline. No one permitted off the trucks even during a halt. And the people sit quietly. But in the early days, we really went through things."

They had been two days on the road, then, without food. Unable to move the convoy, he had run to the farms, to the villages, begging food for the children, the babies. At last he had scooped out the final drops of gas, sped to Munich on his motorcyle, and come back with rescue trucks carrying food and gas.

—And so, said Yitzhak the Yugoslav, he was no longer a chief. Emissaries from Palestine had replaced the original volunteers. Very well. All he wanted was to go to Eretz and start a garage. If he could only take one car along— or even just a motorcycle. He couldn't live without some kind of vehicle. ...If he wanted, he could go to England; he had an uncle, a Lord. Anyway a Sir. Yes, it was so. He could show me letters. I could ask Ernst or Miriam about the time his uncle had come to Munich to see him. His uncle was rich, a Sir, and wanted him to come to England. But he had refused to go there: he was going to Eretz. This was his last trip as a Brayha worker. On the next trip he would go as an immigrant. He had been promised.

He would start an auto repair shop; he would do all the labor himself, putting his earnings into tools and machinery. One day he would have a model shop, the most complete, the best in Eretz. He would start in one of the small towns, not Tel Aviv, but soon the shop of Yitzhak the Yugoslav would be known all over the land. For he had a right to go now, he had done his part.

Yes, I thought, it had been stuck together like that by the Yitzhaks, impetuously, in disorder, in desperation, this organization formed under the pressure of people unwanted anywhere, this improvisation that was now in its third year, that had lasted long enough to become systematized, to have workers sent from Palestine, to have sets of regulations of its own and a discipline within itself. I had feared that I would be too late to make the Brayha film, I had thought the world couldn't let such a horror go on year after year, but for two years Yitzhak had been travelling these roads. I needn't have worried, the world had left us ample time.

I returned to the French checkpost. One call had gone through, but the matter had then been referred to a higher level. Meanwhile cigarettes were being passed around, everyone was amiable: within the post a stove glowed.

I wondered indeed why Ernst hadn't seen to it that these posts were notified in advance of the convoy's coming? To risk keeping people out on the road all night, over such a detail! After all, he had official documents. And why, too, did this immense convoy have to be moved in the cold night, when everything was triply difficult? During the day, a few calls could have straightened out the matter in ten minutes.

Now there was a sweep of lights, and a jeep rolled up. Two American sergeants emerged. They were from the checkpost we had already passed, and they were in bad temper at having to stick their noses out into the cold. But they had received instructions to hold the convoy. "Hell," one of them said, "there was a general warning today about illegal refugee movements being expected on the roads."

I had often wondered whether the Brayha boys were dramatizing matters with their passion for secrecy and their tales of British agents everywhere. Why should anyone want to pursue these poor devils, to spy on them, to hamper their movements?



As far as the American authorities were concerned, it would seem that the more that got out of the zone, the better.

Ernst and his aids of course tried to pursuade the MP's that the general warning could have nothing to do with this convoy. Here were signed papers, all stamped and sealed. Everything in order. Ernst began mentioning names of generals and other high authorities. Let a call be put through to Frankfort, to the Adviser for Jewish Affairs. If there were illegal movements on the road, obviously this was not one of them.

Two more hours passed while the French and Americans waited for instructions. The refugees sat in the cold. At last, past three o'clock in the morning, the French received word. They were to check the convoy, person by person. They moved a little table onto the road, and set up a storm light. One by one the trucks drove up, discharged their numb, half-asleep passengers, the women trying to keep their babies from waking in the colder, sharper air. Numbly the people filed by the little table, offered their "identity cards", mumbled their newly memorized names and places of origin. The French guard checked the cards against the names on the typed list in the official document.

Though burdened with this chill nighttime duty the guard kept his punctilious French manner, his good humor. Every single name was examined.

The American sergeants had returned to their hut. After all, the trucks were past their barrier. If the French decided they were okay, the hell with it.

Numbly the people crawled back into the trucks. At least the vehicles offered protection from the wind. The squalling of bebundled infants wrenched from sleep subsided. One by one the trucks ground ahead, the ice crackling under their wheels.

By dawn, the whole column was in movement.

Ernst and Miriam were white with exhaustion. I thought I understood their irritation. To be confronted with an all-night delay of this kind after the trouble they must have gone through to secure the group visa. But, I ventured, wouldn't it have been better if they had set out in the daylight? Then a single call to the consulate would have cleared the convoy.

Miriam looked at me softly.

"But you had a group visa?" I repeated. After all, I had seen it.

"Yes, we had a visa for the people who went on the train," she said.

For surely, if you got hold of a document, you didn't use it only once. You made a copy.

The whole movement, the sixty trucks on the road, all this was a gigantic bluff. Even now things had to be done in such a way. The train had been "legal". This was "semilegal".

As we rode on through that icy night, we could not help asking ourselves: but was it really necessary to bring these people out in this manner, in hardship, without sleep, without warm food? Then one had to ask the converse: how else could it be done?

How else? A thousand people a month could be moved legally by the IRO, and in circumstances not much better than these. Very well then, couldn't the families wait in the camps another few months, another year, wouldn't it be the same as waiting in Cyprus?

There is no reasonable answer to the movement of history, to the compulsions that drive people on the way. Surely it could not be the blandishments of Zionist agents from Palestine that had brought these people onto this road, for they had all known how it would be, others had gone before, and the stories had long ago come back to the camps, the tales of journeys such as Yitzhak had described, the reports of the voyage of the Exodus.

No, I had to keep reminding myself, last year there was the pogrom in Kielce. The old old tale of the Christian child "abducted" by Jews, and what did it help if the child later admitted that he had invented the whole story at the suggestion of an evil old man? The dead in the pogrom were dead. The will to believe evil of us was still there in the pogromists. And so the remnants of Jewry had lifted themselves and fled for their lives; that had been the flood out of Poland pouring along this route. And this year the flood was out of Roumania.

In the camp in Salzburg I had listened to the father of a family, where he sat on the floor with his wife and children about him, as the wife opened a kerchief and drew out part of a



loaf of bread, and a tin of AJDC meat, to prepare their family meal. There were four children, the eldest girl was eleven, and holding the youngest in her arms.—"A man doesn't uproot his family with little ones for no reason," he said, "to go on the way like this to an uncertain future. For even if we get to Palestine, I will have to begin anew there and find a way to earn a living. Why, then, does a man go?"

He took out his wallet and showed me a snapshot of a rakish, smiling young fellow. "My brother. He is dead. They killed him, during the war, in what happened there in Jassy... And still I tried to live there among them, until now. I was in the dairy business. I went out to the villages and bought butter, cheese, eggs, and sold to my customers in Jassy. But so, in the last months, each month a new restriction on us. I could only buy so much, and a month later half as much, and I—you understand? I could not longer earn a living. I saw how it was—there would soon be nothing. And so here I am."

Bricks without straw, and this year the Roumanians, and next year probably the Hungarians—as I was yet to see for myself, on my journey.

Part of this is history now. Jews can go to Israel more or less legally now. But out of Roumania, and Hungary, they can scarcely come even in stealth. From North Africa, from Yemen, from other lands the Brayha brings them out by devious means. But what I record here lives in the experience of the thousands who took the Brayha route. It has bent their ways. Ever since the war, this road through Europe has been cutting itself deeper into the Jewish historical experience.

Could it be wondered then that many of the younger men, the partisan veterans who went by this road, and went by the stinking crowded ships, and lived through the inferno of Cyprus, and entered Palestine at last only to feel the deadly hand of the British still in the land—could it be wondered that they turned to terror?

All this is over now? Not for those who went through it. Their twisted sense of value, their lost years and starved years and broken years, their embittered hearts may yet lead to strife and to events that will have to be understood. For all this has become part of the living Jewish organism, and needs to be known.

The caravan of sixty trucks churned through the hills, and in the morning was out of the snows, at a rest-halt by a stream. The people climbed down to wash and to eat of their provisions.

And late in the afternoon we came to the border of France itself, and here everything was smooth. The customs men knew the Brayha boys. They made a great formality of checking the names on the visa, one by one. And then the trucks rolled over a war-time pontoon bridge into France, and on to Mulhouse, were Red Cross workers were waiting with sandwiches and hot coffee, alongside a special train, a real train with seats, that would take the people on to Marseilles. There they would be dispersed amongst nearby camps, to wait for a ship.

And so some of the middle-part of the film was done. We returned to Paris for a new cameraman.

This was to be Jean-Paul Alphen, who had lived through a year in Buchenwald and its branch slave camps. Though Jewish, Jean-Paul had been arrested rather for resistance. He had been living with his in-laws in a farm village where he was not generally known as a Jew. There, he had operated a depot for parachuted arms, and a traitor had given his name to the Germans. They hadn't found the arms, but had accused him also of being a Jew. Knowing that his life was in question, his wife had denied his origin. One of the Nazi officers, staring at Mme. Alphen, declared, "Of course your husband is a Jew. Jews always get the prettiest women."

The visa-chase began all over again. In the end the Polish visas arrived. But Tereska was by then worn out and ill. As the visas were only for two weeks, she refused to delay the journey. We arranged the two back seats of the stationwagon lengthwise, forming a couch; there she lay bundled in a cave of film cases, cameras, reflectors, as we drove across Europe once more.

Our trailer had, for reasons of character, been named Albatross. One night in Germany the hitchring wore through and the springs came loose and the body fell off. A GI happened along and said we were lucky, as the town was a center for resale of war equipment, and we'd find a hill covered with trailers.



But alas, the colonel in command said he was selling trailers in lots of a hundred to foreign nations, and he couldn't figure out how to sell me one. We managed to get the Albatross patched together in a German garage, and finally limped into Prague to hunt up Arthur Zegart, an American photographer who shared our mania for recording the exodus. Ziggie literally gave me the shoes off his feet, for I'd be wading through snow in Poland, he said, and I had no high shoes. We started at last for Poland.

* * *

I knew that I would not be able to reach my family's town of origin, for Vilna was now in Russia. But to know Poland itself, I felt, would fill the gap that had so much troubled me in the past.

My first contact was not to correspond at all to the Poland with the Jewish villages of legend and imagination. Toward evening we found ourselves entering the town of Walbrych, a mining and steel center near the border. As we followed a streetcar line toward the center of the town, I had a queer sense of recognition—rather than some picturesque village out of a remote past, this was a place I had known in my own life: it was Gary, Indiana, the steel town. The same drab shabby streets, the same formless brick houses, the same gloomy street lamps. Yes, I realized now, the Poles working in these mines and mills had emigrated to Chicago and built a duplicate of their home city around the steelmills on the south side. We found a grimy little hotel, almost like the place where I had written the first draft of *Citizens*.

That same evening in the street, we encountered a few young men whom we recognized somehow as Jews. They had that way of milling around, the Jewish overplus of energy, looking for life, for some connection with somebody, with something. We tried a few words of Yiddish. What were they doing in this town?

This entire region, they explained, was designated as the postwar center for the Jewish population, as the Jews were to

replace the folk-Deutsche who had formerly lived here. Most of the surviving Jews were only now returning from Russia, where they had fled during the war; they had had a hard life in Siberia and in other isolated areas, but they had been saved. The first to return had indeed found some comfortable ex-German lodgings, but by now there was the same old cramped poverty. The government, and certain Jewish leaders, they told us, were making a great propaganda about Jews taking up manual labor, entering the mines, taking over the German farms—they shrugged. Only a few determined communists were working in the mines. It wasn't that Jews feared labor, oh, they were now used to labor. But for whom? for what? Why should they labor in the Polish mines without any hope of learning anything, of rising in the world? Besides, they didn't feel at home with the other workers. And so here they were, as we could see; they milled around, did a little trading, worked at their old crafts, sold things in the market, drifted to Wrotzlaw, and little by little they seeped out of the country on the Brayha route. Already, these were only the leavings.

In the morning we passed through Lodz, on the way to Warsaw.

Tereska's family were from Lodz. She had last been here as a little girl. Lodz at that time had been the great Jewish industrial city, with its textile mills largely in Jewish hands. During the war, even part of the ghetto Jews had been kept alive for a time to work for the Germans. But in the end the ghetto had been razed like all the others. We saw it, a crumbled hole in the middle of the city.

We drove down the main street. Tereska recalled her grandfather's fur shop on this street, in an immense flat just above a shoe store. And her aunt's flat had been directly across the street; from her grandmother's diningroom one could see the chandeliers in her aunt's diningroom.

We parked the car and walked. The shoe store was still there. We entered the building, went up a stairway. It was not as broad and imposing as it seemed in her memory, but still was one of the better buildings of Lodz.

We came before the door. Tereska had spent a good part of



her childhood here; just inside this door had been the salesroom filled with rich furs, coats, muffs, the richest shop in Lodz, and beyond the salesroom had been the apartment where an ample, hospitable family life had been lived.

All the aunts and uncles and nearly all the cousins of the immense family of Lodz were dead, that she knew. By now the only two survivors had appeared, a young man from Warsaw named Tadik, and a remote cousin, a girl who had slaved in a munitions plant. The grandfather with the great beard, a man of beautiful old-world dignity, was dead, and the aunt from across the street was dead, with all her children.

We stood there in the hall. And I realized how much more remote it would have been for me to return in this way to Seleznick, near Vilna.

"Don't you want to go in?" I said. Since she spoke Polish, she could explain herself to the present inhabitants. Surely they wouldn't mind for her to walk through the apartment.

"No... What for?"

We turned and descended the stairs, softly, almost tiptoeing as if afraid of being caught there.

From all the tales absorbed in childhood, and from the writings of Yiddish novelists, I had conceived an image of Poland as a vast primitive land of endless dark woods, little dirt roads leading from one thatched village to another. The cities, I imagined, had narrow crooked streets between old wooden buildings.

But it is strange how one part of the world resembles another, and in the years I had been looking at things with the eye of a film-maker I had often remarked that a shot of any city could be cut in for any other; a side-street in London, Paris, Prague could be slipped into a film about Columbus, Ohio, and no one would know the difference. And unless one deliberately sought for the identifying characteristics, the vast part of every countryside was the same, fields, roads, streams, and cattle browsing. It was an unending source of wonder, when we drove through Europe and now through Poland, that there was so much animosity between people when on the whole their way of life looked the same in one country or another.

The roads in this part of Poland were surprisingly well paved

and excellently marked. There were indeed one or two tiny oldfashioned villages with thatched-roof huts, of the picturesque sort seen in the *National Geographic Magazine*—villages right out of Sholem Aleichem, but with no Jews. They appeared to have been left for adornment along the main road.

In a few hours we were in Warsaw.

As we drove through the miles of ruins, a feeling of awe overtook us. We had seen the ruined cities of Germany; there, one had always retained a sense of haphazard destruction. But this destruction seemed methodic, intentional.

The city was like a vast archeologic excavation where only foundations could be traced, with an occasional bit of wall.

We had arrived toward Sunday evening, and there was no movement in the streets. It had been a strenuous trip; Tereska slept for thirty hours, while we started the wheels for permission to film.

From the endless ramifications of Tereska's family, we found a few more survivors, on her mother's side. There was a doctor who had remained in Warsaw, and his wife who had escaped to Russia, cut logs in Siberia, and returned, and there were two nieces who had returned from Russia. The girls, like their uncle, worked in the government. Outwardly, the Plotskers were like a normal family, living in a neat little apartment reconstructed since the war; there was even a grand piano in the flat. But one never spoke of the husbands of the girls, or of the son of the Plotskers, "deported".

The doctor himself was rotund, philosophic, indeed another Larry Jacques of Chicago, the same liberal physician interested in the arts, only instead of going through the Republic steel strike he had gone through the Warsaw uprising and taken part in the battle of the ghetto; he had been one of the last to escape through the sewers.

In the morning Dr. Plotsker drove with us to the area that had been the Warsaw ghetto. As we drove down the city's main street, the Marshalkowska, we realized that our Sunday nightfall impression of entering a dead city had been erroneous. Everywhere there were workers patching ruins. Children still rummaged in



the debris for usable bits of metal and pipe, women trundled bricks, men labored on scaffoldings, the entire population seemed to be employed in reconstruction. Occasionally one saw a machine, a bulldozer, a mixer, but mostly there were people with handtools and perhaps a wheelbarrow, and horsecarts endlessly plodding through the streets fetching bricks. Nowhere in Europe had we seen such universal, endless activity. There was no happiness, no whistling, but a continuous dogged outpouring of energy, and we began to notice that here and there entire blocks had been rebuilt among the ruins. The main street itself, at eye-level, even seemed normal, lined with busy shops. But Dr. Plotsker told us to look upward, and we saw that it was a one-story street gouged out of the debris; above the shops were the skeletal walls of the smashed city.

We drove straight on and came to what seemed the end of the city—but the vast open field was only an area of crushed brick. This had been the ghetto.

There it was, a flat expanse, acres, in the midst of the ruined city. The ruins standing around this area appeared like complete buildings, in comparison. I had seen nothing so final since I had walked on the green fields where Lidice had stood.

Dr. Plotsker said it was difficult for him to orient himself, to show us where his place had been in the ghetto. For there were no traces of streets. Only the last year, carts and wagons had made a few ruts through the debris, but these did not necessarily fall where the streets had been.

And then we realized that it was from here that the carts loaded with bricks came into the city. All through the rubble there were little digging-centers. Usually these were worked by family units. The husband dug, using a pick, the wife sorted out the whole bricks from his excavation, and the daughters carried the bricks out and piled them by the rutted lane for loading onto the carts. The price was a zloty per brick. This was the "Jewish treasure" being dug out of the ruins of the ghetto.

There had been tales of hidden gold and jewels to be found in these remains. But all such treasure had been systematically unearthed by the Germans. I had myself talked to survivors who had been sent from Auschwitz in digging brigades to sift through the remains of the ghetto under the guns of German overseers, turning in whatever valuables were to be found. Now

there were only the salvageable bricks, and occasionally some bits of human bone.

In the following days I talked to many in the Jewish community. The few thousand who remained in Warsaw were divided into two camps. There were those who talked only of reconstruction : the Jewish community had to be rebuilt, it would live again, etc. They were giving the official view. Many were sincere, convinced communists who believed in helping rebuild Poland.

And there were the others who believed that every last Jew had to leave.

The schism showed itself most dramatically in the control of the Jewish orphanages. The few hundred children left in Poland were divided between institutions run by Zionists, and others run by Polish nationalists. In the first, they received Hebrew instruction and learned the geography and history of Eretz Israel. In the others they learned to become Polish citizens. A constant struggle went on between the two groups, over the body and soul of every surviving child.

And first of all the children had to be found. I talked to a man whose work was to go amongst the villages, to enquire amongst the peasants, to ferret out the children left by Jews. His task was indeed like a tale out of Gogol—the man with the bundle of money in search of lost Jewish souls. The price was then around a million zlotys, and who knows what peasant might not have been tempted to pass off his own offspring as a hidden Jewish child, for such a sum?

In one orphanage I saw a newly arrived towhead still dazedly trying to adjust himself to this strange new home where a strange language had to be learned and where he had to center his hopes on one day going to a strange land. And there was a little girl, raised amongst the partisans, who knew how to shoot.

The director showed me his album of case histories, and there was the last scrawled letter that had been left with the little girl; the baptismal certificate of the towheaded boy.

"And do you expect that we should now make Poles out of them?" the director demanded.



Actually we were to find that the talk of Polish reintegration was often only a facade. One evening we climbed up to a kibbutz on the fifth floor of a reconstructed tenement. Thirty young people inhabited the flat, using three-decker beds, and maintaining a communal kitchen. They had an assembly room covered with Hebrew slogans and dominated by a lithograph of a somber young man, the commander of the ghetto uprising, Mordecai Anilewitz.

That evening a group was to leave on the Brayha route. We filmed a farewell that ended in a stomping hora that bid well to drive through all five floors. And among the well-wishers of the departing kibbutz we recognized many of the older folk who had spoken officially to us about the need to remain, to reestablish the Jewish community in Poland.

One realist explained the government view to me. "Naturally they want us to remain. They need the few trained people amongst us, the architects, engineers, doctors. More than that —as long as there are Jews here, money comes from the Joint Distribution Committee—in dollars. They need the dollars. Once there are no Jews left—you see?"

Although I had expected protracted difficulties before receiving permission to film, the public relations machinery proved swift and efficient: a young sub-minister received me, got to the heart of my request in a few sentences, approved, and within three days of our arrival I had a document permitting me to film anywhere in Poland, barring, of course, military installations. We moved about without interference, I believe without being watched, and were permitted to leave the country with our negative undeveloped.

Our film was to begin with a scene showing Mika and Tereska returning after the war to a typical village, seeking what might have remained of Mika's family. Finding no one, they left the village and attempted to establish their lives in Warsaw. But then the young wife found herself pregnant, and in a long walk through the ruined ghetto the couple realized that they could not bring a Jewish child to life in this land.

We had come a long way to make these scenes. But as we balanced the camera on a pile of bricks, following Mika's gaze

in a complete circle of the ghetto ruins, we knew that there was no other way of telling what had happened to the Jews.

When he came down out of the scene, Mika's eyes were wet.

From the ghetto ruins, the couple sought out the Jewish Agency office in Warsaw, and there in the unofficial part of the office, another Ernst, another Amos, named Josef, gave them the contact address of the Brayha.

While we were filming in that office, Josef told us how things were, at the time, for getting Jews out of Poland. Since the emigrant flood of a year ago the frontier had operated in moods. Sometimes for weeks the border would be very tight. Then it would be relaxed. Week after week little groups went over; occasionally they were caught.

At times they might be got off with a few gifts. At times they might be jailed for months. Of the eighty thousand Jews remaining in Poland, Joseph thought ninety percent would leave if the way were open.

Only a few weeks later there was a furore over the escape of Mikolajcik; this political event had of course nothing to do with the Brayha. But the Polish oppositionists had used the same route as the Jews. Promptly, Josef and others of the Brayha—eternal Jewish scapegoats—were arrested.

When we had done our work in Warsaw, we sought a village in which to stage the opening scenes of the film. Mika declared that his own native village was precisely what we wanted. It was near Lodz, and had been a village of Jewish leather-workers.

We drove there; it was indeed as he had said, a little village by a stream, with antiquated wooden houses with high peaked roofs. On the little street backing up against the river, his family had lived.

We began to film, for I hoped to catch Mika's own emotion as he approached his birthplace. Mika pointed to one of the frame houses—it had belonged to his grandparents. And hurrying along, pulling Tereska after him, he came to a vacant lot.



He stood there as though he had lost his bearings. "But the synagogue was here," Mika said. "And the Talmud Torah, where I learned to read."

He walked more slowly, past the barren lot. The third house down was where he had been born. After his father had taken the family to France, Mika's uncle had lived in this house.

He knocked.

A Polish woman came to the door. Amiably she told us there were no Jews left in Strykov.

We kept it all in the film, just like that.

Then the Polish woman remembered the miller. The miller was still there, at the edge of town. We went along the river, to find the last Jew of Strykov.

A peasant's wagon stood in the millyard, and talking to the peasant was a bluff square-chested man covered with flourdust; he had a booming voice, and joked overheartily as he helped the peasant pile his sacks onto the cart. There was backslapping, and an exchange of affectionate earthy epithets, You old drunkard, you son of a mangy dog—and the peasant drove away.

Then the miller looked at us.

"Do you know me?" Mika asked.

Slowly, the miller's mouth opened. "You must be a Mikalowitch—Yankel! The image of your grandfather!" He swept us into his house. And there stood a Jewish woman, as in an old Yiddish play, in the act of preparing gefulte fish, chopping the filets on a board.

Mika recited the news of the few Strykov survivors who had escaped to France, and the miller told of how he had been in Russia, and his tale was like dozens of others we had heard by then. "Naturally we worked hard, but no harder than the Russians. Life was hard, but no harder than it is for them. And you see, thoses of us who are alive today are those who escaped to Russia."

As for the mill, it was no longer his property, but belonged to the state. He was the manager.

Now Mika began to talk of a complicated affair, and I understood one of his motives for getting us to come through Strykov. The affair was in itself a pure example of the circumstances

of the surviving Jews of Europe, even in good countries such as France.

Mika's matter concerned a large furniture store in Paris which had belonged to his brother-in-law. This man together with his wife—Mika's sister—had been deported. They were among the six million anonymous dead.

The furniture store had been taken over by a French collaborator. And now the survivors on Mika's side of the family were trying to get it back. Under postwar laws, the collaborator was required to return the store. But all of the members of the owner's immediate family were dead. Only a few of his wife's relatives had survived.—Very well, said the collaborator—what proof was there that this woman was truly the wife of the shopowner? According to neighborhood gossip, he declared, she had only been his mistress! And furthermore, what proof was there that this woman was related to the claimants, the surviving Mikalowitches?

This litigitation had been going on since the end of the war.

Mika needed the birth certificate of his sister as well as his own, to prove they were indeed of one family. And he needed a copy of his sister's marriage certificate, for she had been married in this village. And with these documents he hoped to show that his sister had not been her husband's mistress but his wife, and thus to win back the property.

Mika had of course been writing to the authorities in Strykov. without result. He hoped to profit from our visit by making direct contact with the village clerk.

And so we went with the miller to see the village clerk. The miller testified to Mika's identity. Mika left a sum of money for the documents which were, one day, to be forthcoming.

The collaborator still has the furniture store.

As for the miller himself, we asked him how it was for a Jew all alone in a Polish village? Despite the laws against anti-Semitism we had heard that no Jew dared remain in a small town. Since the Kielce pogrom survivors had gravitated to the few remaining Jewish centers—Lodz, Wrotzlaw, Warsaw.

But the miller of Strykov drew himself up. Oh no, he said cheerfully, things were not as they had been in the old days.



Anti-Semitism was now a serious crime. Moreover, he was a member of the village council. And he was one of the old communists of the region, loved and known to all.

And besides—the last Jew of Strykov offered us his concluding argument—"I am now permitted to keep arms in my house!" he boomed. "I have my rifle here, and I am afraid of no one!"

Somehow the village had been the end of my movement backward. Strykov was any Jewish village; it was Seleznick, near Vilna, too. I had been there now, I had touched home, I was released, and was now like any of my people going forward in search of their place in life.

As I wondered why this return to Poland had been an obsession with me, I realized that in a remote sense I had reacted to the same compulsion as Mika and all the survivors; it wasn't only in the faint hope of finding a brother or a grandfather that one had to return, it was because of the tie to the folk; we were like anyone returning to the old place, seeking the folk itself; we were like David in *My Father's House,* seeking his father, and beyond, all his fathers. In childhood I had absorbed the kitchen tales of my parents, tales always peopled with the folk from the old country, this old country, and always I had had a feeling that this was somehow the source of our life. And now, like all the survivors, I knew it was gone, finished; I was released.

* * *

In Wrotzlaw we received the address of a kibbutz near the Czech border; from there the crossings were made.

The place was an ordinary farmhouse, with a well in the yard, a few barns, a lean-to housing a dozen cattle. Some twenty people were in the kibbutz. Across the road was another group of the same sort. Every few months, a batch of people completed their training and went off, and other young people from Warsaw or Lodz or Wrotzlaw replaced them.

Above the ancient redplush sofa in the livingroom we saw again the brooding lithograph of Mordecai Anilewitz. Across the room was a blackboard for Hebrew lessons.

We remained a few days with them. This was a young group, with only one baby born so far amongst them. They had escaped, quite young, to Russia, and few of them knew anything but labor. One was a truck mechanic. "Do you know how a man becomes an expert in Russia?" he said. "There, you break one truck, and you smash another, and you ru'n the motor of a third. That's how I became a truck expert in the war. The same way, after the war, I learned to be an expert watchmaker." He had the characteristic little melancholy smile of the Jew forced to witness the ineptitude of a world that was not his own. The Jewish smile.

There was a "workers' rest camp" a few miles away, from which groups sometimes left for the border, and one evening we went there and found the group that had danced the hora in the apartment house in Warsaw; they were to cross the border that night. Many were hastily sewing up sacks that contained their heavy belongings, their extra clothes, a few books, mementos. These sacks would be delivered to them, they were promised, in Vienna. But they would not risk their valuables—one had a little camera that was his fortune, another a radio repair kit, and such things they carried with them. At last the sacks were sewn and labelled. Again each comrade caught the leader aside, asking anxiously, "Are you sure?" "Don't worry, it's a system, you'll find it all in Vienna."

Then they were assembled for their final instructions. In case anyone was caught at the border he was to say that he was alone, or merely part of a small group who had taken it into their heads to go to Palestine. There was no organization. They knew of no one from Palestine in Poland. Understood? As for their membership cards in various Jewish organizations—these were now collected and torn to bits. It was best to have no papers at all.

Each carried a knapsack containing clothing, a loaf of bread, a few cans of food. Some had blankets, and also carried suitcases. Behind them lay a little heap of torn identity cards. Strewn about the room were empty carton suitcases from the things they had packed into the sacks.



They clambered onto the truck that would take them to the starting point for their first walk through a forest.

On the Czech side was the town of Nahod, where the refugees arrived from Poland. At the beginning of the exodus they had simply come over the border and camped in the fields, some days by the thousands. After a time an American girl, Ann Leipah, working out of the AJDC office in Prague, had managed to get relief assigned to them, and finally a reception center had been bu lt, consisting of a long wooden barrack with a barbed-wire fence around it. Through this building had passed all the remnants of Polish Jewry.

Some nights they had overflowed into the yard, where they had made shelters for themselves in holes covered with boards.

Of all the people in eastern Europe the Czechs had been most sensible and humane toward the immigrants. They had counted the refugees as they arrived, permitted them to stay until a train was available, and then shipped them across Czecho-Slovakia to the next Brayha station at the Austrian border, near Bratislava.

On the way to Bratislava we stopped in Prague. I deposited the negative of the Polish journey in Ziggie's flat, in an army foot locker, labelling it "Exposed film". It would have to remain there until our return from Palestine.

In a town near Bratislava there was another reception hut. On its bare board walls the migrants had pencilled their names, sometimes in groups, as a kibbutz, or as a political or religious group; rarely, there were families. One man had carved his entire odyssey : Moshe Lishansky, Grodno, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Buenos Aires, Montreal, Grodno, and with an arrow, Jerusalem, and all encased in a Jewish star.

In this hut the refugees waited to be led across a bridge into Austria. A limping Brayha worker was in charge. At the far end of the cabin he had a storeroom with some emergency food and clothing provided by the AJDC. While the people waited

they plagued him for rations, for clothing. He tried to be hard and to refuse.

On the day we came to film, his post was filled with Roumanians. They came from Roumania into Hungary, stole across Hungary to this point where Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, and Austria joined. From here they would be taken into Austria.

It was not easy to come out of Roumania. An eager, puffy man, a housepainter who was making the voyage with his wife and a year-old baby, told me of all the times he had tried. The first time he had taken a train to a border town and been caught and sent back to Jassy. And then? He had already given up his trade, sold his furniture. Twice more he had tried, and the third time he had got through. And then? He was in Hungary. If the Hungarians caught him they would send him back. But the Brayha was operating in Hungary, and he and his family were moved by stages across the country, and at last across the border to this point.

Since then, escape from Roumania has become virtually impossible.

Some of the Roumanians in the hut were well-dressed city folk with good leather luggage. And there were some who looked as though they had walked all across Europe, with the children snivelling, and in broken shoes. There were mothers with babies in need of milk, and the limping one went to open the store room for them. Immediately, the entire population of the barrack stormed the door, like the ravenous Jews I had seen at the liberation of Theresienstadt.

"Baruch, you promised me a coat—look, I have no coat, I will freeze." "Please, I'm not crowding, I'm not pushing, Baruch, but just look at my shoes—"

He shouted at them, pushed them back while he seized tins of food for the families with children. From the pile of shoes he tossed footwear to the girls with flimsy slippers; he tried to close the door but couldn't and at last in a kind of rage at his own susceptibility and at the whole world that had brought Jews to this point of begging, he began flinging clothes at them from a heap that lay like ragpickers leavings, there. Old army storm jackets, women's dresses and coats collected in America—he flung out the clothes without looking to whom, and the people snatched what they could, to make exchanges later.



Now the Czech customs officer appeared, to examine the baggage of the refugees before they crossed the unofficial border, for such was the local arrangement. And suddenly as he looked into their suitcases he held aloft a new cardboard box, taken from a dilapidated valise. A tumult arose. Baruch hurried limping to the scene, and seized a sallow young man in a long coat, who was protesting vigorously. Baruch cuffed the fellow, enraged. "For your filthy little affair, do you want to ruin our whole arrangement?"

What was it then? Baruch explained. This border was not far from Vienna. A man could make his way here in a day, and get to Bratislava where he could buy a little merchandise. And then he would join a new group going to Vienna, and there he would sell his merchandise, for in Austria prices were high.

Well, Baruch understood, the temptation was great, for what else did these fellows have to do, hanging around idle, sometimes for months, rotting there in the Rothschild Hospital, in Vienna?

And what was this priceless merchandise? I asked.

The cardboard box was opened. It was filled with spools of thread. About a dollar's worth.

The merchandise was confiscated. The speculator protested his innocence, begged, wept—and finally shrugged and moved on with the crowd. They formed outside the hut now, ready to make their way into Austria. One last time, the limping Baruch was accosted by the whining speculator. His entire capital. Everything lost. The speculator followed Baruch to one side. Stormily cursing the fellow, and cursing himself, Baruch gave the speculator back half of his confiscated merchandise.

Now the group walked in single file through a field behind the little town to the Brayha bridge.

This was a long wooden structure across the Danube. Large sections of the bridge, Baruch said, had been demolished during the war. After the war the Brayha traffic from Poland through Czecho-Slovakia had become heavy, and there had been the problem of bringing the people on into Austria. Though the Czechs were not opposed to the passage of the Jews, they felt that it should be done as unobtrusively as possible. It could not be done

through an open, official point, such as Bratislava itself. And even if the crossing were effected, there remained the problem of getting the people through the Russian zone to Vienna.

Scouting the area, the Brayha boys had found remnants of a bridge in a town some miles from Bratislava. On the Austrian side it gave onto a wooded region with many side roads to Vienna.

The Haganah undertook the reconstruction of the bridge. Once it was done, the bridge served almost exclusively for Brayha traffic. So well established had this route become, that shortly afterwards when the Czechs were preparing a new series of maps they had considered designating this as the Brayha bridge. In the end, it went unnamed.

The Czechs at the barrier greeted Baruch. The file of refugees clambered up from the riverbank, the barrier was raised, and the people walked accross the long bridge. A truck followed with their baggage.

On the other side was a checkpost manned by Austrian police, who appeared to be going through their motions in practice for the time when Austria would again be a real nation. They lifted their barrier, complacently.

A few yards away a bus was waiting. This vehicle, unusual for the Brayha, was reserved for this route. The people crowded into the bus and were on their way to Vienna.

The Rothschild Hospital was a name that had become notorious throughout the world. Commission after commission had visited it and described the overcrowded conditions, the families sleeping in the corridors and even in the yard. A year after these investigations, our arriving group was still lodged in a broken-walled garret room, two to an army cot. They received hot soup, and supplemented it with what they had in their knapsacks.

The hospital, a massive structure which had been a medical center in prewar days, was now rather a hospice, a reception center for all eastern Jewry coming through Vienna. It was a key point on the route of the Brayha.

The rear of the building was still reserved for medical purposes—mostly maternity cases. The front half was the hospice. It was run by the immigrants themselves, through a personality named Teicholtz who alternately screamed and wept his



"steady residents" and his fluctuating Brayha population into orderliness and submission. Even representatives of the AJDC and of the military in Vienna were said to quail before Teicholtz, who alone knew how to control the complex refugee problem that touched upon all the zones, that involved every kind of civil and military authority. Teicholtz was regarded as the veritable head of the Jewish community in Vienna, and he regarded himself as a servant of the Brayha. All of his energy, all of his adroit manipulation, was devoted to getting the people on their way to Palestine.

Small transient groups, already organized into kibbutzim, like the groups of young people from Poland, were usually bunched into the garret rooms for their few days of waiting. Transient families were packed into the old ward rooms, now filled with two-decker bunks. In these vast rooms there was bedlam every night after lights-out; there would be endless brawling and quarrelling from those who couldn't get to sleep, and there would be childrens' cries... but the Jews were used to all that. Each little family huddled over its belongings, the mothers and fathers worrying about how to get extra rations, where to get a bit of chocolate, a tin of sardines, which of the AJDC workers to approach for extra clothing.

In what had been the private rooms of the hospital, were the steadier residents, several families to a room. There were those who were too old to move on, and those who were awaiting visas from America, and those on the Brayha route who had to stay over while a member of the family recovered from an illness... So they remained in their blanket-partitioned bit of a room, with washing strung between the upper tiers of the bunks, and they cooked supplementary rations on alcohol stoves, and drank coffee out of tin cans.

In one such room lived a young man who claimed, with his father, to be among the pioneer residents of the Rothschild Hospital. The boy was receiving aid to complete some technical courses in Vienna; in his spare time he worked for the Brayha. Soon he hoped to be able to transfer his studies to the Technicum in Haifa.

He told how the hospital had been taken over by the first refugees from Poland. As the military government of Vienna had become organized, these refugees had managed to have

the place designated as a Jewish DP center. Only minimum rations were received, but when the AJDC appeared on the scene, supplementary food was provided. The rations had always lagged behind the influx of population. Still, with a few combinations one could get along.

The combinations were made outdoors, in front of the hospice. For as though by a perverse rule of nature the US Army PX and grocery stores were located directly opposite the DP center, so that the derelicts of Europe could watch the constant stream of wives and German girlfriends of the occupying power carry out their cartons loaded with soap, cigarettes, and chocolate, and drive away in their smart cars.

There were signs all over the street forbidding loitering. But always there were a few hundred DP's drifing back and forth, talking out their combinations, while DP women paraded their babies. At moments, in front of the Rothschild Hospital, there would be a relaxed air as on Sabbath in front of a synagogue—except that these people were scarcely dressed in Sabbath best.

Our kibbutz from Warsaw was still waiting in their garret room. Their sacks of baggage had not yet come through. Each day their spokesman found his way to the Haganah office on a side street, and made his complaints, and was reassured that everything would shortly be in order. Then their baggage arrived and they were assigned to a transport moving on to Germany. But one of the girls in the group had fallen ill. They didn't want to leave her behind, and asked for permission for the group to wait for the next transport.

We decided meanwhile to go to Hungary and film what we could of that stage of the journey. A guide from the Vienna Brayha was to accompany us.

On the door of the Brayha flat was a little sign announcing that this was the headquarters of the Committee for the Reception of Transient Jews of Europe. Behind this imposing title, Amos operated, with the help of a Palestinian or two, and a squad of violent DP's.

There was a diningroom with a huge anti-British cartoon on the wall, and there was Amos's little office with the telephone, and there was a sort of squad room with a few spare truck tires



and tins of gas, and a pingpong table for the use of the Brahya boys when they were not running the Bratislava bus.

The chief guide and the noisiest of the lads was a roly-poly Hungarian with a broken-toothed grin. He was called Nutti.

Nutti was a specialist on the Russian zone. He was reputed to know forty sideroads and a hundred footpaths from Vienna to the Hungarian border. He was filled with guile and ruse.

And the boys loved to tell how Nutti could employ sterner means. Once, Nutti had been entrusted with a truckload of specially picked lads who were coming out of Hungary to take a Haganah training course. Nutti drove down a sideroad, at night, but was confronted with a barrier that had not been there before. He gunned the truck, smashed through the barrier. The Russians fired. But he got his boys through.

As he played pingpong, every stroke was a melodrama. If he lost a point, he clutched his head and howled—losing another point in the meantime. If he managed a difficult return, he leaped into the air, waving his arms for joy.

On the way through the Russian zone to Budapest we were shown a sample of Nutti's art. We had with us an English lad named Ginger, a Brayha worker who was going to show us around Budapest. Though the rest of us had provided ourselves with Russian zone passes, Ginger had none.—Never mind, he said, he would get Nutti to come as far as the border and take him across.

We drove along a main road. Presently Nutti told us to stop. He and Ginger got out of the car. The Russian checkpoint, Nutti said, was just beyond the bend, a hundred yards up the road. He and Ginger would meet us on the other side.

There was a woods on our left, and we supposed they would slip through, emerging beyond the checkpoint. We drove up to the hut and presented our papers to the Russians. Everything was in order—blue zone pass, Hungarian visas, army pass, all. But as the Russians thumbed through our passports, we were petrified to see Nutti and Ginger approaching. They ambled past our car, continuing up the road.

Since they carried no baggage and were bareheaded, it was possible to accept them as local inhabitants. But twenty steps in front of us, Nutti halted a Russian soldier and asked for a light for his cigarette. He smoked up leisurely, extracting the last

ounce of drama from the situation, then thanked the soldier and moved on.

When we joined them a few moments later, Nutti said, with utter bliss, "Did you see me stop and ask for a light?"

Some months later we heard he was in jail.

In Budapest, the synagogues had not been destroyed, they stood untouched, vast and imposing. Each housed a soupkitchen.

There was a great redbrick synagogue that strikingly resembled one of the most imposing synagogues of New York. Yes, Hungarian Jews had been high in the professions, men of letters, lawyers, doctors. They had erected these magnificent houses of worship. And during the war I had seen the remnants of Hungarian Jewry, had seen the surgeon of Budapest with his violently beating heart, in his last days in Dachau.

And in this city there had been a prominent playwright named Szenesch. His young daughter had gone to Palestine before the war. Hannah Szenesch had returned as a parachutist with the mission of leading out the Jews on an underground route. She had been caught and she had been shot in the yard of the jail, in this city.

And those Jews who were left here could be seen daily, for they came to the great synagogues, they came with their little food-pails to the soupkitchens, to carry their daily ration home, and some could not wait, for hunger, and wolfed their food in the hallways, in the doorways.

Eighty percent of the Jews of Hungary were receiving some kind of relief.

There were few young people, for the young had been taken to the Nazi slave camps, and not many had returned.

In the soupkitchens, individuals were pointed out to us. There was a teacher, and there was a famous eyedoctor, and there was a former store-owner. Many still wore good clothes. They crowded into the back room toward the cauldron of soup, the big black pot of noodles, while the manager shouted at them and pushed them into line, and many with their good manners excused themselves for crowding, because there were so many pressing from behind them in the endless line that extended back along the corridor and down the stairs.



There was a Zionist organization operating openly at the time, though Jews could not leave the country. As for the Brayha, they were at work in Budapest too. At the moment they believed that the departure of ships could be arranged from the other side, from Roumania, and the direction of traffic had been reversed—while Roumanians were sneaking across Hungary to follow the Brayha route to Italy, Hungarians were slipping into Roumania, hoping to take ship from Constanza.

There was some thought of trying to get us through, on the Roumanian route. But a call came from Paris directing us to go by way of Italy. Indeed, our confused wandering back and forth between Poland, Austria, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, might seem a strange way to present a route through Europe, but in itself this was typical of the way of the people, for there was scarcely a survivor who had not blundered back and forth as we had amongst these countries, before finding his way out.

And now, on the way back to Vienna, we encountered one of those nights of difficulty that characterized any movement through Europe.

As we were partway through the Russian zone, on a deserted stretch of road, the trailer collapsed again. This time the top simply fell off the chassis. We had had enough of the Albatross; there would be no way of repairing it in the Russian zone, so we loaded everything onto our camera platform and pushed the accursed body into a ditch. Severely overloaded, we proceeded on our way. A faulty tire began to collapse. The spare, too, had a leak. We hoped somehow to reach Vienna.

But at the zone border we were arrested by the Russians: there was a countersignature lacking on a special gray card that had been issued to us in Paris for the Russian zone. Since then, a new signature was required. The guard kept handing the cards back to us saying, "Signatura Russki".

After a long time, he gave us to understand that we had to report to the commandatura, some fifteen miles to the rear. A guard had to accompany us. But the guard could not come because there was a second vehicle to be escorted and it was out of gas.

We waited. The second vehicle was an Austrian civilian truck. I talked to the driver. He was bleak, exhausted, bitter. He belonged to the village of the commandatura; his truck had been

requisitioned at four in the morning to carry foodstuffs for the Russians in Vienna; all day long he had been in Vienna without food. And then they had refused him gas for his return trip. He had got this far.

From every passing vehicle the Russians tried to beg gas. Finally I concluded it would be better to give them some gas than to spend the night waiting on the road, so I dragged the spare tin off the roof. It was about eleven at night when we crawled up the hill to the commandatura; the soft tire held out.

The Russian headquarters was in a big brick building dominating the town square. We were conducted into a room where there was a long bench and a stove. A soldier sat at a table doggedly reading what turned out to be the army's monthly literary review.

After a while some officers arrived. One of them took a rather humorous view of us, being particularly intrigued by the presence of an actress—Tereska. He began to check our passports. French, Polish, American—what an assortment. Then suddenly his eye lighted with understanding. "Of course—you are all Jews."

Perhaps, I thought, there was indeed a Russian sense of reality.

We could hear him telephoning, in his office. Finally he emerged, telling us we would be sent under escort to Vienna. We had only to wait until a car was commandeered for our escort.

What went on during the rest of that night gave us an intimate glimpse into the Russian occupation of Austria. After some hours there appeared a tall middle-aged Austrian wearing riding breeches and boots. He had the obtuse air of a man half-aroused from sleep, unable to cope with anything. Two Russians tried to talk to him, with no results. An interpreter was aroused and fetched.

The first man, it appeared, possessed an immense Diesel truck, which consumed far too much fuel for such an errand. The Russians at last dismissed him.

After about an hour another sleepy, surly automobile owner was brought in. This one explained that his motor was broken. All night long, this went on. Toward dawn the military police



gave up, and rousted out a pair of Austrian police who resumed the quest. They too were unsuccessful.

The commandatura began to stir with morning activity. Men went off to breakfast. We mentioned that we were hungry. The guard went for instructions and came back smiling, informing us we could eat.

"Where?" we asked.

"Why, you can eat your own provisions, from your car."

But we had no food in the car.

Oh, then he was sorry.

At about eight, another officer arrived and raised an uproar about the failure to get a car. He sent for the Burgomeister, and commanded him to produce a vehicle in half an hour.

I asked if I could go out and see about my flat tire. A block from the commandatura I noticed a civilian garage: it was filled with cars. I supposed everyone had a part missing.

But when I returned to the commandatura, the Burgomeister was arriving in a sport car. The driver wore a feathered Tyrolean hat. Alas, he didn't have enough gas to reach Vienna. Gas would have to be requisitioned on the way.

Mika was placed with a guard in the rumbleseat of the escort car, while a guard with a tommygun took Mika's place behind us. We got as far as the next town; the escort car halted before a pump, by an inn. The Russians demanded gas. The innkeeper protested that he had none. Ah, they knew such tricks. They made him unlock the reservoir and poke a stick down into the tank. All this took a long time. Meanwhile the sport had invited us into the tavern, offering us a glass of wine. When we said we had had no breakfast, black bread was produced.

And now the Austrian began to talk. A few townfolk joined. Never before had I heard such concentrated venom, for all the hatred I had known in the world. "You have seen how they are," the sport said. "You have only one little contact with them. But picture us, ruled by these barbarians. Oh, it will burst! It will have to burst!"

And then they looked at us, conspiratorially. When were we coming to free them? What were we waiting for?

I had bethought myself of the remainder of gas in my spare

can. I took it down and began to pour the stuff into the sport's tank. But suddenly he said, "Wait, that's only water."

How could that be? There had been gasoline in the tin the night before and the car had remained all night in front of the commandatura, under guard. I wet my finger in the stuff, and tasted. It was water.

The Russians shrugged, without surprise.

Stolidly, they went off to telephone for instructions.

It had begun to drizzle.

I thought of how it must be for the Russians, thwarted, frustrated, with every smallest movement costing a mountain of energy. Here in the Austrian countryside they were amidst a population of Catholic small-holders, diametrically opposed to their ideology. Would they force their way through, or would this become one of the areas where constant friction led to conflagration?

All our lives were involved. These Austrians saw no other way than battle, for their personal solution. But was this necessarily the truth for all the world? Was Hitler's last instruction to prevail?

The Russians returned, announcing that they would give up the escort car. But we would have to take the two guards in the stationwagon.

The soldiers crowded in behind, somehow, with their guns on their laps.

The sport smiled faintly as he bid us goodbye. Once we were gone he would, of course, find gas enough.

We reached Vienna and were taken to the Russian security headquarters. Again we sat in an anteroom. We asked if we might communicate with American or French authorities. Niet.

All afternoon we sat. There was a continuous parade of officers through the room. And there was a lengthy comedy with a mild little Austrian woman who was asking the Russians for some sort of routine information, and getting tangled in the replies. Once she turned to me with a question in halting English. I couldn't help her, and said, "We have our own troubles, too." I noticed that she had a nice face. She left.

Shortly afterward an American colonel came hurrying through



the room. There was our chance; I would try to stop him on his way out.

But I didn't have to wait. I was called into a Russian colonel's office. The American—our provost marshal—was there. After a good deal of polite grimacing on both sides, and the usual assurances that we had been treated well and that the whole affair was a misunderstanding, we were released,

"You were lucky," the provost marshal told us. "The last ones they got on that road were held for two weeks before we found out they had them."

And how had he known about us?

Well, someone had passed through the waiting room and noticed an American correspondent sitting there.

So it had been the little Austrian woman. And the Russians too had their charwomen and casual dumb questioners wandering through American offices. And the Austrians could scarcely wait for the fight to begin.

When we reached a hotel and unpacked, we found that the soldiers in the car had pinched Alphen's precious Rolleiflex. Loot is loot.

* * *

We had now linked up with the first part of our film. The way led from Poland or Roumania or Hungary through Bratislava and over the Brayha bridge to Vienna. From Vienna's Rothschild Hospital it led to various DP camps, such as Camp Bialik at Salzberg, the first we had filmed, and from there to Munich and on to other camps and finally on to France or Italy. When British pressure was too strong on the French, the movement swung to Italian ports; this was harder for the refugees, as they then had to make the passage across the Alps. The starting point for this passage was the most legendary of all Brayha depots—Sammy's place, in the mountains.

Sammy's place was a decrepit Tyrolean resort not far from

Innsbruck. Before the war it had belonged to an Austrian Jew; a surviving relative had turned the property over to be used as a DP camp. There was a tenement-like hotel, with a big yard and a farmhouse. Down the road was another ex-hotel, a three-story frame building with an outside cookhouse.

To reach Sammy's place the immigrants came in small convoys through the French zone of occupation. A system had been perfected whereby they could be shipped in the baggagecars of a night train that stopped at a village at the base of the mountain. Sometimes, by a judicious use of cigarettes and coffee, the Brayha also managed to conceal DP's on the express from Vienna that halted at Innsbruck.

When the DP's arrived in the railway station, Sammy's trucks would be waiting to haul them up the mountain. In winter, only the heaviest trucks could make the grade, and sometimes a truck would get stuck on the last hairpin turn, and another would get stuck trying to pull it out, until the entire Brayha and a horde of DP's would be laboring in the snow to push out the vehicles.

Sammy himself was from Turkey and Palestine, young, a bit of a dandy, and murderously quick-willed. His camp was of course officially a DP camp; indeed a handful of leftover DP's inhabited the first hotel. Sammy's boys had only the greatest scorn for these "speculators" who, indeed, must have been settled there since the closing days of the war when I had met Jews from a last deportation train wandering in the snow hereabouts as our column advanced on Innsbruck. The "good ones" from amongst them, Sammy explained, had already left for Palestine or been absorbed into Brayha activity.

The farmhouse served as Brayha headquarters, and the second hotel, down the road, was reserved for the transients, who usually passed a few days in Sammy's place waiting to be taken over the Alps.

The wildest drivers in all the Brayha worked for Sammy. The youngest, fifteen, had already shot his way through a barrier.

Only a few weeks before our arrival there had been a battle at Sammy's. One of the saddest incidents in the entire postwar history of the Jews in Europe, it had been a battle rising out of



the obscure, bitter conflicts in the twisted hearts of the survivors, that had inevitably taken the form of underground violence.

The Irgun had made heavy recruiting efforts in the DP camps, finding a naturally fertile ground among the embittered survivors who lived every day through the travesty of neglect that faced them after liberation. Not content with gaining adherents in the camps, the Irgun agents sought to control their proselytes on the entire route to Palestine, and thus came into conflict with the Brayha.

The story told by Sammy's boys was that one night as they made the long march over the Alps with a party of refugees, they had been met by certain frontier guards with whom they had long-standing arrangements. The guards had just captured a party of strangers using the same route. The strangers were led by Irgunists.

The Brayha boys were furious, for the Irgun intrusion threatened the security of the route itself. "If anybody at all could come along our route, the guards would get scared, and it would end in our losing the route altogether." That was bad enough; but on being interrogated by the Brayha boys, the DP's in the irregular group claimed that they had been required to pay for their passage.

At this, the Brayha lads began to beat up the Irgunists. Two were brought back to Sammy's place and imprisoned. A few nights later an Irgun raiding party made a surprise attack on Sammy's place, set fire to several trucks in the yard, invaded the farmhouse, dragging the drivers out of bed, beating and mauling them.

There was a boy, a born Palestinian, who had arrived only a few days before to work in the Brayha. He was clubbed to death there, in the doorway of his room on the second floor of the farmhouse.

The marauders escaped in two Brayha trucks which were later recovered.

Yes, in the ghettos and in the slave camps the Nazis had found the way to open wider the bottomless rifts in the human spirit, to set Jew against Jew.

It was just after the murder of the Haganah boy at Sammy's

by Irgunists that I found, in mail forwarded to me from the States, an appeal for funds by one of the innumerable organizations of Bergson and Ben Hecht. Funds for Palestine fighters. A dollar bill was attached to the letter, with the presumption that the recipient would be stirred to send the dollar back a hundredfold. Like many other recipients of this appeal, I turned the dollar over to the Haganah.

In the second hotel down the lane, a few hundred refugees waited for the next crossing. Some passed the time by improving the grounds. Each organization had laid out its insignia in bits of colored stone, around the flagpole in the yard. It was indeed weird to behold these elaborate symbols composed of menorahs and six-pointed stars in the snow-swept yard of a Tyrolean mountain resort, a remote station on the way of the Jews from east Europe to Palestine. Here too was a book in which they wrote their names, in the last hope of leaving a mark behind for a friend, a relative, a townsman. During our stay at Sammy's, the seventy-thousandth traveller wrote his name in the book, on the route of the exodus. About the same number of Jews had gone out of Egypt, with Moses.

The actual mountain passes were far from Sammy's place. The trucks had a three-hour drive to the point from which the march began.

During the summer, it was related, an English captain had come to the border region and spent a month laboriously scouting all the mountain passes that might be used by the Brayha to get Jews into Italy. Finally he had composed a report that was a model of completeness. The Brayha had got hold of the report. "It gave us some good ideas," Sammy said. "He had some routes in his report that we never knew about."

It would have taken a small army to watch and control every possible route. Neither the French nor the Italians cared to co-operate that far with the British in halting the passage of Jews to Palestine.

The transports would leave in the late afternoon, timed to arrive at the mountain pass at nightfall. Then the march would



begin. Since even children and old people now made the journey, the line could proceed only at a very slow pace, with halts every ten minutes.

Not all had mountain shoes. But taught by their experiences in passages all over Europe, they now carried only the minimum of their belongings—a parcel of food and a blanket. For in the curious stabilized arrangements, the DP's had to make the passage on foot, in stealth, for form's sake, while their baggage could be sent by truck through the Brenner pass, under the guise of clothing shipments for distribution to DP's in Italy.

All night long the people struggled through the snow. Sometimes they were led on a path of sorts. But often there would be drifts across the path, through which adults waded waist high, carrying the children.

One very dark night, the guides related, there had been an alarm and the people had scattered. Many had got lost. It had taken twenty-four hours to find them. One old woman, half-frozen, had been carried all the way to Italy.

On the Italian side their coming and going was pretty well known. There was a little mountain café where contrabandists, customs guards, frontier police and Brayha boys sometimes gathered, a whole friendly pack. One of the Brayha boys bragged of his romance with a girl in the café won away from a frontier guard.

And again one wondered, since there was complicity at the frontiers, why did the passage have to be made with so much pain, at night? And again there was the reply—How else would you do it? "They couldn't let us drive through the Brenner in open daylight with truckloads of illegals, could they?"

And again it seemed that if men wanted to do something good in the world, they had shamefacedly to add pain.

So the people crawled over the Alps, sometimes three groups a week. On the other side there would be Brayha trucks waiting to carry them some forty miles inside Italy to the next Brayha post, a hotel in a small town.

We had only half-finished filming at Sammy's place when a call came from Paris for us to drive immediately to Rome to

make contact for sailing. We would have to complete our sequence at Sammy's after our return from Palestine.

In five minutes we had taken down our lights, packed, and piled into the car. But a new difficulty arose. Our trip had taken months longer than expected, and our Italian visas had expired. We had indeed been trying to get them renewed in Innsbruck but had found the consulate closed for a three-day holiday. Only our new cameraman, a Pathé newsreelman who had just arrived, possessed a valid Italian visa. He could drive the equipment across the border. The rest of us could make the trek over the Brayha pass.

But the boys found this inadvisable. We would lose the entire night, perhaps miss the boat in consequence. No. A "semi-legal" method would have to be tried. The specialist in these matters, a Palestinian named Shlomo, was routed out of bed. He unlocked a drawer and selected some forms. They were "borrowed" from an organization whose workers were authorized to pass frontiers. We all four became workers in that organization. But we had to proceed in a vehicle that was identified with it, a Brayha truck known at the border.

It was midnight when we reached the top of the Brenner, followed by our cameraman, Hesse, in the stationwagon. We presented our papers, dispensed cigarettes and chocolate. The Italians looked us over, and demanded whether I was Polish. Poles couldn't enter Italy. I swore that I was no Pole. Mika, somehow, passed easily. They waved us back into the truck and raised the barrier.

We looked back and saw Hesse enter the customs house. We drove on several miles, then pulled up to wait for him. Time passed. We shivered in the open truck. Still he did not appear. Our driver refused to return to the frontier, as he had instructions to take no additional risks. Our reappearance might arouse suspicion and endanger the whole "semilegal" system.

We waited another hour; all the while we could see the boat pulling away, the boat that had been our goal through half a year of pleading, stumbling, begging, conniving. And who could tell but that it might be the last illegal boat? For the partition of Palestine had been announced, and England had declared her intention of quitting the country in May. Perhaps if we missed this boat, the historic passage would never be filmed.



It was too clear that something had happened to Hesse. I declared I would walk back. The driver swore, and turned the truck. The frontier guard, recognizing us, simply raised the barrier. The stationwagon was nowhere in sight.

We found it in Innsbruck. The customs man had hesitated to pass the film equipment, Hesse explained, and told him to come back in the morning when the chief would be on hand.

If we were missing the boat, for this!

And now our own passes were no longer valid. Once more we drove up the mountain to Sammy's, awakened Shlomo. With our new set of passes we reached the customs house as the chief came on duty. We got through, and drove day and night to Rome. We made our contact at the Diana Hotel. We were on time.

The contact was with Ada Sereni, a tiny, electric woman, the widow of one of the greatest Palestine heroes of the war, Enzo Sereni. In past years I had often visited the kibbutz which he had founded not far from Tel Aviv, an immensely successful settlement, Givat Brenner. Sereni was an idealist Zionist, descended from an aristocratic Jewish Italian family. During the war he had served with the Allied propaganda forces in Cairo as the editor of an anti-fascist newspaper. When the British decided to accept Palestinians to work behind enemy lines in Europe, Enzo Sereni, though beyond the age limit, managed to become a parachutist. But he was seized just after his first drop. For a long time his fate remained unknown. His wife, volunteering in the women's forces, reached Italy with the Jewish Brigade and set out to trace him. The last details she discovered only after the liberation of Dachau; there, survivors told how Enzo Sereni had been tortured to death.

Ada Sereni had remained in Italy to carry out her husband's mission—to bring the people home. She worked with Yehuda Arazi, organizing the departure of vessel after vessel from the Italian shores.

Engaged in this work for more than two years, she had sent off a score of ships. And yet each vessel was a new agony, to be worried through on bare nerves. For in addition to the constant watchfulness of British agents on shore, and British ships and planes at sea, in addition to the difficulties in securing crews and in securing provisions, there was the normal, eternal adver-

sary : the weather. Beachhead embarkations could be carried out only in a calm sea.

We sat with Ada Sereni in the hotel lobby while she waited for a report. Contact with the vessel had been made, but for several days the ship had circled offshore, due to heavy weather. Each day spent hovering in Italian waters made discovery more likely. If the British found the vessel they could put pressure on the Italians to impound it; that would mean an immense loss in time, effort, and money.

Presently a typical Palestinian arrived—he had the open, optimistic manner of the sabras. In Hebrew, he reported that there was too much wind today, but there were hopes for tomorrow. Should the ship remain in the vicinity of the beach? It was decided to continue the risk.

As for us, Ada Sereni was of two minds. She had received a call from Paris about us, and she too wanted the voyage filmed. But every added moment spent in loading was an added risk. How much of our equipment was essential? I said that if necessary we could leave all of our personal belongings behind, and carry the camera, film, and a minimum of lighting material on our backs.

It was the lighting that had me most worried. Ever since the inception of the project in New York I had tried to anticipate ways for lighting on the ship, as I realized the scenes in the hold would provide our most important material. Some friends of mine had done a documentary on a fishing vessel; they told me I might encounter a twenty-eight volt current. My last act before leaving New York had been to hunt out a New Jersey plant that made powerful bulbs for such a current, and I had them with me. On this last day in Rome I brought three automobile headlights, in the hope of somehow being able to improvise a lighting system. As the Brayha ships varied greatly in size, there was no telling what I might have in the way of power. My cameraman considered that two thousand watts was an absolute minimum. In some of my OWI documentary work I had filmed in trailers where there was little current, and I considered that even with a thousand watts I could get something on the negative. But if I happened to get on one of the small ships, I might lose the material of greatest pictorial value, simply for lack of light.



Naturally it had occurred to me to try to have a small generator taken aboard beforehand—when the ship was provisioning. But a film, to anyone outside the craft, seems merely a process of "taking a few snapshots", and it proved impossible to prearrange this matter. I'd have to work out the lighting some way, once I got on board.

The next morning, Ada Sereni had lost her look of agony. Or rather it had changed to a different sort of agony. The weather now seemed workable. This opened up a whole series of worries—of timing the vessel's approach, timing the arrival of the preparatory shore units so as to cause the least distraction on the beach, of co-ordinating the arrival of a thousand refugees from a half-dozen scattered camps at a specified hour at the secret beach. All this, without alerting the enemy.

I still had with me everything we had filmed since Prague. Seeking out Claire Neikind, ONA correspondent in Rome, I packed away the tins of exposed negative in the bottom drawer of her kitchen cupboard.

At noon, we left with Ada Sereni and a couple of Haganah "shoo-shoo" boys for the beach. Ada Sereni had thought of a way to utilize our presence as cover for contact with the ship. The beach, she explained, had been used during the war for the landing of an OSS unit that had worked behind the German lines. If our car appeared, conspicuously marked Film Documents, the local inhabitants, should they happen to notice unusual activity, could easily be convinced that we were an American unit making a film about that OSS landing. The presence of the vessel offshore might even be taken as part of the re-enactment.

We set off, with this explanation in readiness. About two hours drive from Rome there was a turnoff. We passed a single farmhouse, and then drove through miles of wasteland. The road trailed off into nothingness. We parked the car before the sand got too soft. There was a bramble-covered hillock, and below us a beautiful stretch of beach. Not a soul in sight.

On the horizon we made out an approaching vessel.

A Brayha car had accompanied us. Now they opened a suitcase containing a shortwave radio, and made contact with the vessel.

Presently a dinghy detached itself from the ship and rowed toward us. Ada Sereni and her daughter, a sixteen-year-old sabra,

hurried along the beach, waving their scarves. The dinghy pulled up to shore and two men climbed out. The first was an old seaman with gray stubbled face, powerful wrinkled hands, and the precise dignity and kindliness of bearing one would have anticipated in a person engaged in this work. With him was a tall, younger man, curly-haired and handsome, the captain of the vessel.

There was a brief discussion of prevailing winds. Conditions were fair. The ship would anchor offshore at nine that evening.

It was then about four. I decided to drive back to a town to telephone Claire Neikind in a last attempt to get a small generator for lighting. I detached the new trailer, leaving it on the beach—and providing the last of the disasters of the voyage.

About seven miles from the beach the same old tire gave out. The spare had been left in the trailer. The road was deserted. Leaving Tereska sitting in the car, I walked back the seven miles, only to find that a new crisis had arisen in the meantime. A Haganah truck had arrived with a crew of lads who were unloading and inflating rubber landing craft. In my absence my eager cameraman had attempted to film this work; since night was falling he had lighted a few flares.

When the torches flamed up, with their ghastly intense yellow light and their sputtering fumes, half the Brayha had leaped on him, taking him for a spy in the act of signalling the English! Only Ada's intervention had prevented a lynching.

In the intense strain and suspense of these last hours, his action had put our entire project in disfavor. We were viewed as dilettantes who would only get in the way and create danger. Ada had practically decided to cancel our trip.

When I arrived on the scene, Hesse and Mika were gloomily sitting on our equipment, forbidden to stir. It was scarcely the moment to confess that I needed a vehicle to take me back with a spare tire to my stranded car.

I thought of poor Tereska sitting alone on the road hour after hour. What a last-minute fizzle.

And now the immigrants began to arrive. Instead of the usual trucks, a stream of hired busses appeared. They parked in neat rows, with each group of refugees coming out to form around their leader.

As the busses came pouring in on time, as the refugees were



silently ranged, the tension began to relax a trifle. One could get anything from a Palestinian by talking Hebrew, and so I got a shoo-shoo boy to drive me back to the stranded car. We weren't going to miss the boat after all.

The beach unit, when we returned, was completing the assembly of a little emergency pier—out of the same prefabricated units that I had seen on that terrible night three years before, in a river crossing during the Battle of the Bulge. At least here was a good use for U.S. Army leftovers.

The night became quite cold. Two units alternated, working in the water. The boys wore only bathing trunks, and gradually their legs turned greenish. A small bonfire was lighted in a well-screened hollow; the off-crew danced and jumped around it until their turn came again.

A sizable swell had arisen, capsizing a dinghy which was being used as buffer between the pier and the rubber rafts. The watercrew struggled with the dinghy, managed to get it righted. Now the rafts were ready to begin ferrying passengers to the vessel. A cable-line was established.

The first group of refugees was led from the parking lot. They crossed a stretch of sandy waste; occasionally a flashlight showed for an instant. Slowly, tortuously, they came toward the beach.

Now they were burdened with their total possessions. The scenes I had witnessed in the marches through the woods across the borders of Europe were utterly eclipsed. For each individual was bowed nearly to the ground, half-crawling in the effort to carry every bit of his earthly goods. With their gigantic bulging knapsacks, topped with blankets, with suitcases and bundles knotted onto the knapsacks, their shapes, in weirdly glimpsed silhouettes, were of fantastic creatures unrelated to any known living form. And amongst all these, there were an inordinate number of women with babies swathed in shawls, in blankets, slung before them, burdens balancing the sacks the same women carried on their backs.

The people were led down onto the beach and seated on a little rise of sand facing the improvised pier, to wait their turn for the rafts. Slowly their ranks grew until a few hundred were sitting there, utterly silent, immobile, their infants hushed and sleeping. Thus five or six rows of them saw waiting their last wait, staring at the dark sea and at the vague, scarcely discern-

ible blot out there, the ship, their ship, with its tiny lights arcing slowly as it rocked on the black water.

To witness this, to have the means at hand and be unable to film it, put us into an agony of frustration that endured most of the night through. I sought out Ada Sereni, who was hovering around the operation whispering instructions, urging speed, speed. But actually there was nothing more that she could do now: the operation would follow its course regardless of prodding. She could now listen to me.—Surely, I pleaded, a few torches would go unnoticed in this isolated area. They couldn't even be seen as far as the main road. If a ship at sea noticed them, and even if the ship made enquiries, it would be daylight before any search could be started, and by then our vessel would be loaded and on its way. Surely if she agreed with the usefulness of our project at all, she had to give us a minimum opportunity to carry it out.

Yes yes, she said, it had to be done, but only at the last moment, when everything had been loaded and we could get away quickly. What was the absolute minimum of torches by which we could film?

"Two," I said. The flares lasted nearly five minutes, and in that time I could try to light the faces of the people waiting, and to follow the line to the pier, to film the people getting into a raft, and the raft moving off.

It would have to be the last raft-loads that were filmed, she said. And we ourselves would only be taken aboard at the end, for if any had to be left behind, it would be us, rather than immigrants. We could light our torches just before our turn came on the rafts.

There was nothing for it but to wait, even uncertain that we would be taken at all. The loading of the rafts was slow and terribly arduous. The crew had to pull each raft to the pier, hold it there against the sea-swell while the immigrants, with their immense burdens and their babies, stepped the length of the slippery narrow pier, like soldiers bent under a double-load of equipment. Then, balancing on the overturned boat, they climbed into their raft. The bottoms of the rafts were several inches deep in water. The people piled in, twenty, thirty, and then the crew shoved, and they pulled on the cable, and as their raft moved out, the next one was pulled against the pier.



As the night wore on, some of the boys stumbled out of the water, falling from exhaustion. Volunteers were called from among the immigrants.

Once the pier disintegrated. Loading was suspended for nearly an hour as the numbed lads labored in the water to get it into place again. The refugees sat with fear and despair in their eyes, as though already watching the long-awaited vessel fade in the dark, without them. Ada Sereni stood over the laboring water-crew, devouring herself with impatience. Every moment she asked her daughter for the time. But the pier was put together again at last, and the loading resumed.

But it went so slowly! Watching the little line of refugees coming to the pier, every one of them with two or three times the allotted poundage of baggage, Ada Sereni gave vent to her impatience, scolding, scolding the leaders, the people, oh how many times had it been decreed, how many times had they been told—oh it was impossible! impossible! things couldn't be done like this! everything was delayed, the loading would never be finished before dawn, the ship would be caught, where was discipline? oh, she had a mind to make them drop their packs, leave everything behind on the beach! Oh, why would people never learn discipline, how could anything ever be accomplished!

And at last in an excess of agony she retreated to the car, huddled, not having the heart to make anyone leave a single bundle behind, and demanding every few seconds, What time is it?

And each sailing was like this, and the people were whispering tales as of the time when everyone arrived at the beach but the English caught the boat and got the Italians to intern it, and the people had to be taken back to their camps to wait for another chance.

As this rumor spread, they began to crowd to the water's the refugees. Not all would be taken aboard, it was rumored. There had been a miscalculation. Too many busses had been ordered, too many people had been brought from the camps. Some would have to go back.

As this rumor spread, they began to crowd to the water's edge. Soon there was a pushing desperate jam at the little pier, and a double row of burdened half-hysterical refugees were jos-

tling each other as they tottered along the narrow slippery boards, trying to leap into the next raft. Hoarse, whispered disputes, muted curses and exhortations in all the languages of Europe spread along the beach.

The beach commander angrily ordered them back, threatening to halt the embarkation altogether. But more and more people crowded to the pier, in panic. The group leaders exhorted, pushed. At last the launching crew had to be called out of the water to help push back the crowd, and to get them settled again, and quieted. The order of embarkation was resumed.

And yet they all knew they were going to Cyprus, nine chances out of ten. They all knew there might be a fight on the boat when the British captured it, and some of them might be killed, and in any case they would only go to wait in another camp on a desolate island where food and water were scarce. They knew, and they were in panic that they might be left behind. They could not bear this continued stagnation of remaining yet another while in Europe, returning to yet another DP camp to wait for another vessel. To be on the way—no matter where, but to be on the way.

Thus we waited through the whole night. At last only about a hundred immigrants remained on the beach. The commander gave us permission to light two flares.

I held the torches aloft while hoarsely whispering directions to Hesse, to the immigrants, to Tereska, to Mika, in French, in Yiddish, in English, in Hebrew. Despite the preparatory speech I had made, begging everyone to proceed as though we were not there, the people followed the natural reaction of people everywhere, they grinned into the camera, took attitudes, waved—the flares were burning down and what we were getting was hopeless, useless. My whisper became a desperate throttled shout, I gesticulated with the flaming torches while the sparks fell on my arms, in my hair; the commander was asking nervously if I didn't already have enough; I waved the torch in the face of the worst grimacing offender, exhorted, jostled Hesse to turn him toward those who weren't gesticulating—the torch sprayed my neck, my hands, but somehow in the burning time of the flare we filmed the entire crowd on the pier, Tereska in line, the embarkation, the crew pushing the raft into the sea. The torches were down to my fingers. I flung the ends into the water.



I begged for permission to light two more. Even one. No use.

Then it was our turn for the raft. Mika and I staggered out with the sacks of equipment on our backs, the case of negative grasped between us. I jumped into the raft, and found the water halfway to my knees. The equipment had to be kept out of the sea water. I dumped my personal knapsack on the bottom and began piling equipment on top of it, as the material was passed on to me. Amidst the surging muddle of refugees, we somehow got everything on, and I found myself with the heavy case of negative perched on my knees while I tried to hold a cameracase and a suitcase of accessories above water. The raft cable ran just under my nose, and as I couldn't free a hand, or budge, I expected to be decapitated by the cable at any moment.

Everyone pulled on the cable, to hurry us toward the vessel. Hesse had his Eyemo out and his arms full of flares; I begged for him to be allowed to light one, to film this remarkable scene. Too risky.

At last we bumped against the ship; the sea was choppy; another raft was maneuvering to get away. Hesse, being exceptionally tall, managed to swing himself out and seize hold of a rope ladder; in a second he was on deck ready to film the mounting immigrants, Tereska among them. Word had been sent ahead to the vessel that a film crew was coming and that we were to be permitted to operate I began shouting directions to Hesse.

Just then one of the immigrants who had been trying to help free the unloaded raft lost his balance and fell into the sea. We fished for him. Above, Hesse lit a torch to film this scene. Angry hands snatched it from him and flung it into the water. I tried to shout up explanations in Hebrew, and Mika managed to get up beside Hesse to help him.

The drowning man had been hauled into our raft by then. Mika lighted a torch, and Hesse filmed the people from our raft as they grappled their way up the rope ladder, reaching for hands that were stretched down to them, and finally rolled over the rail onto the deck. At least so far, though scantily, we had got the essential movements on film.

The raft was emptied of passengers. Now I could get out from under my burdens. But the case of film proved too heavy to go up by hand. People began to grumble and curse. Dawn was

coming. We were delaying the ship. Someone yelled to heave the damn thing into the sea, and in another second all our negative would have been gone. But Mika grabbed a rope, let it down to us, and the crate was rescued. I went up the ladder at last.

We hadn't been in the final raft after all. Two more arrived in the dawn light. We stood in a drenched, shivering, exhausted little group, near the ladder, shooting in the feeble light, and filled with a crazy elation—after everything, we had got this far, we were on the boat. In our limited way, we knew what all the others felt: to us it was a film, to them it was their lives.

The sun was just beginning to show when we pulled up anchor. One could feel the last vestige of tension dissolving as though eased into the sea.

We sat on our equipment, drying. The immigrants had been warned to remain in the hold, out of sight, until we were well out to sea. The hatches were covered except for a small opening by the ladder. Down there were nearly nine hundred people.

I went down. There were three tiers of planks, and the floor made a fourth layer. The people had crawled to the remotest corners of these shelves, to find places, and yet there wasn't enough space for them all to lie down. And now no one dared budge for fear that his place would be lost. In the narrow passageway, the placeless ones squatted on their baggage. Many of these were women, holding babies in their laps. Some were complaining bitterly that the best resting places, the outside places nearest to air, and off the floor, had been taken by the strong and the young, whilst mothers with children, and old people, all the weaker ones had been left sitting underfoot, with no place to lie down. All this would have to be changed. But as yet no one budged.

A ladder led down to the second hold, and here the gloom was worse than above, and already the air was heavy and warm and stale. The people lay exhausted, cramped together on the wooden platforms, some having to wriggle like worms to get to their resting places deep back in the cubicles. There was not height enough for any but children to sit up between the shelves.



We had known that it would be like this. They also had known, and few now complained. After that cold and anxious night, most of the people lay exhausted and inert; still there were a few who tried to arrange their lying-space, to improve their conditions even in this meagreness: there was a capable husband who had already managed to partition off his space with blankets, so that he and his wife had something like a bunk to themselves, with extra blankets to soften the wooden bed; he had arranged their packs as resting places for their heads, and their camp dishes and waterbottle already hung neatly from a p'peline.

The voyagers looked like no great material for a nation; there in the gloom, unwashed, weary, bundled beings in the hold of a ship, like sacks of the crudest human stuff flung in unsorted. A heap of people out of any slum, except that they had not been scooped up at random: their will had brought them here. And because of this the hold seemed to contain the infinite possibility of human energy.

In one corner, a kibbutz had managed to find space for the entire group together; the girls were not beautiful, to be seen so, but one of them though short and clumsily formed had a most sympathetic face, and the boys looked to be such as had proven their capability to their own selves. They would do.

On deck there was still a scattering of people dragging their last bundles to safety, and bringing out things to dry: some were seeking drinking water, beginning to worry about food.

Now a bare-headed little man in a mackinaw appeared on the small deck by the pilothouse, above. He was the ship's leader. Through a megaphone he called out in Yiddish that so long as we were within s'ght of shore, we were in danger of being apprehended. Therefore there could be no movement on deck; everyone had to keep out of sight.

The few people getting water now crouched down doubled, so as not do be visible above the ship's rail. We too doubled down, waddling toward the little after-deck.

On this deck were two cabins. One was reserved for the Palestinians: the ship's leader, Gad, in the mackinaw, was—inevitably—a man from Yagur. His assistant was a blond Haganah lad who looked like a Greek statue; his name

of passage was Paulo. And there was a roundfaced girl named Miriam who appeared to be no more than eighteen, and whose task was nominally the welfare of the passengers, though she disappeared mysteriously at regular intervals into their cabin where, it was not difficult to guess, she dealt with radio. Miriam was quietly poised, friendly though uncommunicative, and as the voyage progressed she emerged as one of the staunchest personalities on the vessel.

The second cabin was a cubicle which had once served as messroom for the crew. The crew now took its meals below, standing and squatting in the narrow passageway to the engineroom, while their former messroom was become the ship's hospital. Three tiers of bunks had been built, leaving just enough space in the center for people to reach the bunks. For the time being there were no patients, and we were assigned a bunk each.

There was an official ship's doctor, a refugee from Vilna who had signed to make three such voyages before being landed in Palestine. And there was also a volunteer physician, an elderly Roumanian migrating with his wife to Eretz. The doctor's wife was widely built, and ailing, so as to be scarcely able to move from her bunk. They lay head to foot in order to fit together in the narrow space. But they were cheerful, for they already had a daughter in Eretz, and the doctor had managed to send ahead funds for the purchase of a share in a Haifa pharmacy. Once the chief of a Bucharest hospital, he had made the passage over the Alps, from Sammy's, with his ailing wife, to get to this ship. His medical kit was forever slung from his shoulder, and he wandered over the ship, alternating shifts with the younger physician, climbing down into the hold many times during the night. Curiously, even in this situation, there developed the classic rivalry between young and old physician, and they made little ironic remarks about each other's ways.

The first hospital patient appeared soon enough. Two young men carried in a bony, wispy Roumanian who had fallen down a ladder. In the cramped confusion below, he explained between gasps, he had tried to hand the baby down to his wife, slipped, and in order to save the baby, injured himself. The Vilna doctor taped him up tightly; he had a cracked rib. The patient was stowed in a floorlevel bunk, where he lay groaning.

He was an electrician, it turned out. As I struggled to put



together my lighting system, he began to gasp advice to me. Our bag of small reflectors had been lost in getting aboard, and I labored to make replacements out of tin soup bowls.

In the following days, as he became more comfortable, the electrician told about himself; indeed he was extremely talkative, and his favorite subject, aside from himself, was his sixteen-year-old daughter. Like the Roumanian physician, he too had a daughter already in Eretz Israel, and all day long he would lie there reading over her letters, seizing anyone who came within range and reading the letters out loud again. What a pure, what a golden daughter in Israel she was! Only listen! A girl of sixteen, scarcely a year in the land, and listen how she writes! "Oh father dear how can I tell you of the beauty of our wonderful little land, father dear, you will come here, you will work for our land, and you will feel your life grow young and whole again." Isn't that remarkable? he would demand with his eyes full of tears. Like a poem, from a girl of sixteen!

He was familiar with the manufacture of electric light bulbs, and had dreams of establishing such an industry in Palestine.—Tell me, you know Eretz, he kept asking of me, is there already such an industry? Ah, I would like to bring in a new industry! I would start in a small way. I know some people, Roumanians, who could help with capital—

With my usual clumsiness around electricity I managed to blow a fuse. He half-dragged himself out of his bunk, directing me through the tangle of unfamiliar ship's wiring. I was trying to hitch together the auto headlights, for closeups in the hold. But there appeared to be a short-circuit in one of the lights. At last the Roumanian took it from me, disassembled it on his stomach and found the flaw.

Late in the afternoon a drizzle began, then came a steady rain. The sea roughened, the vessel pitched. Below, seasickness became universal. Women were dragged up the ladder for air; they collapsed gasping, lying on the soaked canvas over the hatches, while their husbands hurried for a doctor. Uninterruptedly, for three days, the physicians were to repeat that there was no remedy for seasickness. The entire ship wallowed in a universal retching that seemed the destined accompaniment for the creaking of the planks, the groaning and straining of the vessel in the heavy sea. The people were permitted on deck now, but they

could scarcely choose between the drenched deck of the violently rolling ship and the fetid misery below.

And all through the night men kept stumbling into the little hospital cabin, gasping that their wives had fainted, that something had to be done, and always one doctor or the other climbed out, clutching the slippery ship's railings in the tempest, staggering down to the hold. The hold was of course the steadiest part of the vessel; the violent movement felt in our stern cabin became scarcely more than a cradle-roll in the bottom center of the ship; yet the sick ones hysterically demanded to be transferred to the hospital, already more crowded than the hold.

Two of the fainting women were in their last month of pregnancy, and should not have been permitted to make the voyage. We carried them out, managed to get them up to the hospital, and stowed them in the lower bunks. Mika and I had given up our places; Hesse was sick.

Throughout the second day the storm increased. A few men staggered miserably about on deck, trying to prepare and distribute soup.

Gad had not budged out of the wheelhouse, day or night. He stood beside the handsome young Italian captain, at times he took the wheel. During the second night, I found him "taking a rest" curled up under the map table.

We talked for a while. This was his fifth crossing, his fifth ship. Once he had succeeded in landing his passengers, but that had been at the beginning, before the British had established their airtight blockade.

When the boat would be captured, he explained, he and the crew would mingle with the passengers, passing as immigrants. "Relatives" would be assigned to the Italian crewmen. They would be taken with the others to Cyprus but would be slipped out with the earliest group of quota immigrants; thus in a month he would be back in Europe to bring over another ship.

With Gad, as with Paulo and Miriam and Amos and Venya and Ephraim and the Haganah boys on the beach in Italy, I experienced that same wonder at the infinite adaptability of these people out of the towns and kibbutzim, rural folk who had little experience in worldly dealings, and yet could emerge and roam the seas and roam Europe on secret missions, make contacts with people of all social and political levels, deal with govern-



ment officials and border guards and seamen, using smatterings of all the languages of Europe, and succeed year after year in carrying on what must have been the greatest conspiratorial movement of those years in Europe. Less than two hundred of these Palestinians had managed to move a hundred thousand people across a continent, sixty thousand across a sea, to the Palestine shore.

As for Gad, he had never been a mariner, but once assigned to this task, he had come to know every shiplane, every cove of the Mediterranean.

The wind had increased to a gale. The Italian shook his head—he thought it unwise to buck the storm any longer. We should return and hug the coast, following it around the tip of Italy until the storm abated.

That would mean another day or two lost, and a risk of being spotted from the coast. Gad would not give up as yet. For another hour he navigated the shuddering vessel into the storm. It seemed to stretch in every fiber, staggering, falling into each trough as into a final void. There it would lie for an instant inert, as though uncertain of the power to rise again, and after this moment of death it would slowly begin to right itself.

Even Gad was at last convinced. He gave over the wheel; they could turn the ship and head for shore.

Below, terror had replaced sickness. A few of the group leaders climbed out, haunting the deck. They wanted some sort of reassurance, and, as one of the sailors stumbled by, they caught at him, asking what was happening. The sailor told them in an Italian which they half understood that the ship was turning about.

The maneuver itself was perilous, but at last it was managed, and the vessel ploughed into slightly quieter water near the shore. Gad went to his cabin for a little sleep; we turned in, also.

But about an hour later I became conscious of a commotion in the passageway just outside the cabin. Men had stopped near the door; they were talking excitedly, looking for Gad. Apparently he, too, had heard them for he came out to them, and presently the entire group squeezed into the hospital. The men explained that they were a committee representing the passengers. The people below had learned from the sailors that

the ship had been turned around, and was heading back to Italy. The people did not want to go back. Under no circumstances would they consent to be landed in Europe!

These dregs, these remnants, said to be the remains of a population whose will and self-respect had been dissolved in the years of charity and of camp restrictions and of idleness, these remnants, quaking with fear and retching with seasickness—and yet I heard them as Gad heard them.

Gad turned on them with bitter weariness. "Why do you doubt me?" he demanded. "It is my task to bring you to Eretz, and I will bring you there!" Suddenly he was like a Moses, storming at the doubting Karaites. "What right have you to harass the sailors, taking their word over mine? Did I say we were returning to Italy? We're taking refuge from the storm, and that's all. The seamen are responsible to me, and not to you! If they don't want to continue with the journey, I'll tie them up and bring the ship through myself! Now let there be an end of this. Go back, and don't dare to doubt us again!"

Silently, they squeezed out of the little room, and clutching the rails, staggered back to the hold.

Now every hospital bunk was doubly occupied. Aside from the injured electrician, there was a girl with a very severe earache; the rest were all pregnant women who had been brought in gasping, fainting, some with foam on their lips.

Only one of the patients, however, caused the doctors serious concern. The woman appeared to be in her forties, though she was probably a good deal younger; she was in the final month of pregnancy; her heart was in poor condition, and her fainting spells were frequent. This woman had an eight-year-old daughter, a chubby and wise-eyed little girl who could speak the language of every country through which they had wandered, and who now tried to learn French from Tereska. Sitting crouched by her mother, who lay in a bottom bunk, the little girl would tell us bits of their past.

A Polish peasant had saved them, keeping them on his farm, but toward the end of the war someone had betrayed them as Jews. The peasant had managed to get them safely away, but he himself, they later learned, had been shot for harboring them.



After the war the woman had married again. And this shapeless mother, with her few gold teeth and her awry hair, would lie there worrying whether she had done right, for the man didn't amount to much, she said, he was only a peddler; still, she had thought it would be better for her little girl to have a father, to feel herself part of a real family. Half in delirium, between fainting spells, the woman would keep asking Tereska whether she had done the right thing, for her little girl was so bright, her little girl could already speak five languages, and she wanted her girl to be educated, to learn to play the piano... Only an ignorant peddler, what would he find to do in Palestine?

In the morning her husband appeared, a timid, huddled individual, the type of male who must inevitably appear guilty and apologetic before a pregnant wife. He had somehow managed to secure white bread and even a lump of butter, as well as a can of sardines. But the woman was ill-tempered; she drove him away, with his good things. Afterward she felt remorseful. Oh, he was clumsy and ignorant, but he was a good-hearted man, a good man, and she shouldn't have been so short-tempered with him... The little girl went to fetch him, and he returned; he had, during his banishment, secured a bit of chocolate for his wife. He squatted on the floor by the bunk, anxious, apologetic, watching her, coaxing her to eat, eat a little.

In another bunk was a fat young woman who lay in peace, a bovine placidity on her face. The Vilna doctor was certain that he would have a delivery, with her, if the voyage lasted beyond ten days.

It was strange how in this room we were surrounded by a multiplication of the story of our film, like a theme repeated in octaves and variations, below and above. And there in the hold the story was being lived again by a hundred women who hoped they would not be long in Cyprus so that the infants they carried in them might yet be born in Eretz. Ours was a family boat, the Vilna doctor declared: one woman in every four was pregnant.

Even during the storm Paulo had pursued the task of rearranging the people more equitably in the hold. He had gone

among them, peering into every corner, finding those who had used a square foot too much for their baggage, finding the strong who could be moved from upper levels to the floor level, placing women with babies in the better layers where breathing was easier. He had even managed to clear out a tiny forecastle as a special cabin for women and little children. Slowly this lad was bringing order into the vessel. He told me, with a touch of amused admiration, of one group he had caught receiving double rations through sending two different men and signing two different group names at the distribution line.

The sea calmed; the people crawled out and drew full breath. The cleaning squads went to work. Now the days were warm, and there was a relaxation, almost a cruising pleasantness, if one could find a spot to sit for a while on deck. Along one rail, people were doing their washing, and now baby clothes began to flutter on improvised lines that tangled with the rigging. Girls sat combing their hair, the men shaved, and a group of orthodox worshipers covered their heads with their striped shawls and recited psalms.

Gad came out of the wheelhouse one morning and took up the megaphone. As many people as could squeeze onto the deck assembled there, while he spoke to them in plain Yiddish of certain disciplines on the ship. "I am only a kibbutznick who has been assigned to this task, as any one of you might have been assigned to it had you been living in Eretz." He knew all too well what hardships and discomforts they had to endure, but such was the only means available for bringing over the greatest possible number with the funds that were to be had, for it had to be calculated that the entire purchase price of a vessel would be lost in a single journey. "I would like to bring you to Eretz on the Queen Mary," he said, "with private staterooms and toilets and running hot water and six-course meals served by flunkies. I would like to carry you directly into the harbor of Tel Aviv with our flag flying and a band playing ashore. But you know as well as I know that this is not yet possible, though one day it may be so."

He told them that as the ship neared Palestine, all would again have to hide below during daylight. Those would be the most difficult days, for the weather would be hot and there would be less ventilation than ever. It would be best then to try



to sleep during the daytime and to come above at night. He assured them that there was enough water and enough food for the voyage; they were not to worry even if the trip took twice as long as had been expected.

Gad spoke to them as a brother, as a servant, as a leader. He was a good man from Yagur.

And he spoke to them also about us. The photographers, he said, were on a mission, just the same as Miriam and Paulo and himself. Our vessel would be the one to give posterity the record of this exodus. And everyone on the vessel could help by doing as the photographers asked, and otherwise by paying no attention whatever to us, by going on with their lives exactly as always, even when we were photographing them.

I tried now to begin on the scenes in the hold. Even when the deck was solidly covered with people, the holds remained jammed, and it was impossible to make the slightest movement without squeezing, jostling, displacing someone. The setting up of the smallest light meant moving someone or someone's belongings; to find camera room meant asking a whole family to move; there was always an elbow or a foot or a hanging bundle blocking part of the view.

I did not want of course to lose this cramped feeling in the film, and I disturbed things as little as possible. But an hour of work in the hold, pressing, squeezing, contorting oneself, was as exhausting as a night's trip through a forest. Always through the entire voyage there was the sense of never-ending contiguity, the pressure of continuous contact with other beings, so that one felt as though one were spending ten days and nights in a jammed subway, and that madness would come if one could not somewhere, for a moment, stand free, feeling one's entire body untouched.

For my trial effort in the hold I set up two five-hundred-watt lights. The bulbs went yellow. There simply wasn't enough current to carry them. The last alternative seemed to be the two-hundred-and-fifty-watt bulbs in the soup-pot reflectors, with the automobile headlights, that drew very little current, for highlighting. Hesse declared the matter was hopeless: nothing

would register on the negative with such feeble lighting—half of what was already considered the absolute minimum.

We managed to get a few hatches partly opened, so that some daylight filtered down to help us. Again, the very limitations had to be utilized for effectiveness—the meagre light had to be concentrated on cramped shots, on closeups, on details, or rayed through in beams to render the gloomy murky depths, with parts of faces, eyes, picked up far in the gloom.

It was exhausting, primitive work; we were usually triple-folded to squeeze ourselves into some tiny corner under a ladder to get camera-distance, and the ceaseless, unavoidable movement of the people was continually entangling our few cables or disconnecting the clip-lights. When we had to work close to the ladders, where the only bit of daylight came through, we were in the way of people stumbling out for water, food, air.

But the people understood, and bore with us. We managed to film the scene of Mika finding Tereska in the hold of the vessel.

We had no way of testing our film, as the developing kit had been lost together with the reflectors. It was agonizing not to know whether we had anything at all on the negative. But that evening an amateur photographer came around to beg for any ends of film that we might have, and I discovered he had a developing kit on board with him. Indeed one could find almost anything one needed on this ship of "useless leftovers", and it was not only the photographer and the electrician who helped us—when we needed a voltameter to check the camera battery, an immigrant radio repairman turned up with the instrument.

The photographer brought his chemicals and we crouched behind a tier of pregnant women, using a blanket for a dark-room, putting through our test strip of film. And presently we held the strip up to the light. The scene was there.

Hesse seized a roll of the Dupont negative and kissed it. No cameraman would have believed film negative could be so sensitive.

In these middle days of the voyage the electrician's entire family, wife, grown daughter, son-in-law, and grandchild, plus



the husbands of all the pregnant women, plus the entire kibbutz of the girl with the earache, spent most of their time visiting in the hospital, so that it became the most crowded spot on the ship. In the kibbutz was a poet with a profile that seemed to have been lifted off an Assyrian tomb; he came daily and stood beside his comrade's bunk, reciting his Yiddish verses. The husbands began a card game while they exchanged accounts of their various border passages. There was a broad, soft-looking fellow with a cherubic face, the sort of man who always has cigarettes and extra tins of sardines; he and the electrician had passed along the same route out of Roumania, and their accounts mingled until they became as an ancient saga.

"A man doesn't want to leave with nothing, especially when he has a family to worry about, and to tell you the truth I am no lover of hardships; a man should be able to endure what comes his way, but if he can arrange matters so as to avoid hardships, why not?

"I sold my little business, my household things, for what I could get. Naturally I expected to be robbed of half, but in our situation the seller isn't the one who makes the price. I put the money into a few rings for my wife, a few watches, and what can one carry? Yes, a little I was able to send ahead to Eretz. I found a way so as to have something waiting for me for a start in life.

"Well, you know that there were those who claimed they could take you in an automobile, with your family and baggage, straight through the border and across Hungary into Austria so that by the next night you would sleep in Vienna."

"Yes. I heard of it too—but for such a price—!"

"I paid the price, my friend."

"Ah well, if you had the money—" with the proper deference for a man of such station, and yet with a glance of suspicion, for who could tell, now, whether he had truly done it or was just bluffing to give himself stature?

"Not the whole price in advance, naturally, but a man is at their mercy. If you want to go, pay. Well, he came with the car, and a fine car, a Buick. We got in. My wife, two children, all our baggage, and we drove to the border. It was true, as he said, he could drive straight to the border. But once we were there he said another car would come to get us on the other side.

We had only to walk the distance from one customs house to another.

"Naturally, I had suspected all the time it was a crooked game like that. I could have come on the train for a third of the price, and how could I tell whether his friend on the other side could get me into Hungary without papers, or whether a friend would appear at all, on the other side? But a man is at their mercy. And it was true he knew the customs officer, because he brought him to me and said—a little present, a watch, a Parker fountain pen. Well, what could I do? To get out of the country, I paid again. And what about his friend from Hungary? Don't worry, he told me, you only have to wait here and he will come. And before I could turn around, the fellow had disappeared."

The capitalist offered around his pack of cigarettes. "Well, we sat there all night."

The name of the village? another would ask. And the name would be repeated. Ah, yes, they too had passed through that village, and paid the bribe, too, for who wanted to be sent back to Bucharest?

"Did the fellow from the kibbutz come and get you there?" the electrician asked, spoiling the chubby one's story. "A huge fellow with shoulders like a colossus. Mordecai, he called himself."

"That's the one. From the Hungarian side."

"Ah, what a man that was! He had his little arrangement with the Roumanians, he came and joked with them and asked if there were any customers waiting for him. Two or three times a week, they told me, he came there to take Jews over the frontier. He took us through a woods. Fifteen, twenty had gathered while we were waiting there in the customs house. He picked up a child and carried it all the way on his shoulders. Ay, he was a fellow, that one!"

"They hid us in the barn, in the hay—it wasn't bad there at all. They brought us excellent meals. And they wouldn't take a thing from us. Ah, that kibbutz! When I saw what came afterwards, I knew those kibbutznicks were angels," said the capitalist.

I could imagine it, a kibbutz a few miles from the frontier, like the one we had seen in Poland, on the Czech border.



And then? Each group had rested a few days before setting out by train for Budapest. "In Budapest no one met us, and we wandered through the streets—"

"It was the same with us, exactly."

—until at last they had stumbled onto a Jew, the way Jews do, and he had taken them to an office of the AJDC, but there no one seemed to know what to do with them, and in the end they had found themselves in a hospice in an abandoned manor at the edge of the town. "It was so crowded—unlivable. I tell you in those days I wondered if I had done right to take my wife and children on such an adventure."

After some time a transport had been organized, taking them to the Austrian border. The guide told them to cross a stream. On the other side was Austria. In a certain town a few miles away they would find a Jewish contact.

Balancing on steppingstones, they had crossed the river and found their way to a farm, bribing a peasant to let them rest in his barn while two of the party went on to the village to find the Jewish contact.

Behind the barn was a pear orchard. And the people grew hungry and thirsty, waiting hour upon hour in the barn. At last a few of them slipped out and picked some pears. But the peasant caught them and grew angry and complained to the Russian border guards. Two Russian soldiers appeared and rousted them out of the barn, telling them to cross back to Hungary.

"With their tommyguns they herded us back to the stream. We pleaded with them. How could we go back? Then they said they wanted all our watches. We had already given up our jewelry and our fountain pens, at one customs house after another. The Roumanians, the Hungarians. We told the Russians we had nothing more. We told them they could open our baggage and take what they wanted. By the edge of the stream they opened all our bags, they raked through all our possessions. They weren't satisfied. They demanded watches, rings.

"We men of the group consulted together. What could we give? I offered up my last watch, a golden one. Another still had a wristwatch and a fountain pen. We handed these to the Russians. They looked them over and said, no, they wanted more. They ordered us to go back across the stream.

"We had been there for an hour. It was getting dark. We started back on the steppingstones. With each step we called back to them, begging, pleading. In the middle of the stream we were in Hungary aga'n. We would be caught, and what would become of us? We had nothing more for bribes.

"We stood there in the stream, with our wives and our children crying and sh'vering. Then the Russians motioned for two of us to come back over, while the rest waited in the stream. We even gave them our weddingrings."

As he spoke I noticed that he still had a ring on his finger and a watch on his wrist. But then, a man saves what he can.

"I can tell you we were three times back and forth across the stream, until they were at last convinced that we had nothing else to give them. Then they let us crawl back into Austria. But the farmer wouldn't take us any more, and we sat on the road..."

The next day, the two who had gone ahead to make contact returned with a truck. Probably, I thought, with Nutti, from Vienna.

Yes, these were the legends that would grow, and also there would be the legend in which we were living, the legend of the passage by sea.

And now I began to recall from deep in childhood tales of which these were echoes, tales of fathers and grandfathers who had escaped out of Russia, in the years when the czar took young men for half their lives as conscripts; legends of false papers and bribes and of wandering through forests across borders. In those days there had been cross'ngs in steerage to the new land, America, and now this voyage of ours began to become part of the eternal voyage, and these conditions, having been lived through during an eternity of time, were no longer difficult to bear. No, we could live through, and emerge, and grow whole.

Because of the storm we had gone far out of our way. Gad had taken a course circling close to Greece, and then in a diagonal across the sea toward Alexandria, and now, on the tenth day, we were turning parallel to the coast, moving toward Palestine. And on that afternoon Gad assembled the people on the deck aga'n and informed them that the difficult part of the voyage had come. We were nearing the region of British patrols.



Now they would have to remain below, out of sight, during daylight.

In the following night the tiny cook's cabin and even the row of toilets that had been bu'lt on deck were knocked down, so that there might be nothing whatever to distinguish the vessel from an ordinary freighter.

It was during that night that the quiet one gave birth. All evening the young doctor made his preparations. A half-emptied ration closet now became a delivery room. The top of a long cupboard would serve as the table. Aseptic preparations went on for hours, as a former medical student and a young Hungar'an girl with some training in nursing hustled pails of boiling water to the closet.

The elderly Roumanian physician watched the furore with a tolerant smile.

About nine in the evening, the woman's pains began. We carried her to the delivery room. It had been decided that we should film the birth; indeed the mother seemed pleased at this idea. Our two lights brightened the closet.

It was a very easy birth, and in a moment the news had spread all through the vessel—a boy. And that night there was singing on deck.

Somehow, as on every ship, the belief had spread that we would get through the blockade. The young doctor, qu'te optimist'c after his delivery began to say, "You know, I am a skeptical man, but I have a feeling that our ship will arrive." He suddenly began talking of himself, about his service in the Russian Army during the war. Before, in V'lna, he had been a bit of a literateur. I realized that he was of my own age and build. If my parents had never left Vilna—.

The doctor speculated on our chances. For one thing we would be arriving on Christmas. The British would be too busy with their holiday preparations to hunt for us. Or perhaps they would be affected by the'r Christmas spirit—.

The Roumanian capitalist, too, was convinced that we would get through. He had information that Gad know of a secret cove, to which the ship was being directed. In fact, the place was close to Nahariyah.

Even Paulo succumbed to the fever, talking mysteriously about special plans... if we could slip through one more day....

Until now the ship had not had a name. Everyone went around suggesting names. Why not The United Nations, since UNO had voted a Jewish state in Palestine?

The next morning, with decks clean, her hatches covered, and only a sailor in dungarees loitering on deck, the vessel looked like any freighter. The covered holds were unbearably stifling. We were in the warm area now, and there was no breath of wind.

At last Gad decided to lift the wooden covers off the hatches and lay them out of sight. The canvas covers were then folded back in such a way that two men could spread them over the holds in less than a minute. Thus, until there was an alarm, the holds could remain uncovered and the people could breathe.

Now Gad and Paulo came, discussing slogans for the ship. The name for the vessel had been received from Jerusalem; it was to be *Lo Tafridunu, You Cannot Frighten Us.* A banner was prepared in Hebrew and English; for the banner I translated the name as the *Unafraid.*

We decided on three slogans :

Open the door, Bevin.
Your soldiers want to get out
And we are coming in.

Another one was :

From Egypt—Moses.
From Europe—Haganah.

And the third :

We come with the world's consent.

A call went through the ship for a sign painter, and presently a middle-aged man appeared for the job. Several bedsheets intended for the hospital but never utilized, were now segmented, and the slogans were laid out on them.

Far on the horizon a ship appeared.



The alarm sounded. The holds were instantly covered. The canvas cover seemed to rise and fall gently with the breathing of the people underneath.

We, too, were ordered out of sight, with our camera. But there was a porthole in the hospital, giving onto the deck; we planted our camera there.

After a time, the canvas covers were laid back. But soon a second alarm sounded. We heard the augmenting buzz of an airplane.

The four-motored plane swept down, nearly touching the deck. We caught it in the camera.

The plane circled above, and came over again, twice.

Then it was gone.

The rest, we knew, was inevitable. The plane would alert a warship.

Yet we tried to convince ourselves, against our better knowledge, that there was still a vestige of hope. Perhaps the pilot had been deceived, perhaps he had really believed we were a freighter.

Now a few boys in the hold began to cut out bits of colored cloth; they were making a Turkish flag. The sign painter hastily lettered a board with the name of a Turkish vessel selected out of the international register of ships.

In two hours, a cruiser appeared. Once more the holds were covered. Now the canvas scarcely breathed.

The warship came close, and a voice hailed us. "What ship are you?"

Gad called out, in a thick Mediterranean growl, "Turkish."

The British announced, "We want to come aboard and establish your identity."

"Don't understand," Gad replied.

The British demanded, "Does anyone aboard speak English?"

Gad decided that I should act as interpreter. I did my best to disguise my Chicago voice and to sound Turkish. But of course both sides knew that the game was up.

The British insisted that they wished to come aboard. On Gad's instruction, I replied that that was impossible.

They asked where we were headed for. "Turkey," I said, and added the home port named on our sign, "Adalia."

"If you are headed for Turkey," the British voice enquired, "why are you steering a course for Palestine?"

Gad was no master of dissimulation. "Tell them we've lost our bearings," he whispered to me.

I repeated this response. The British offered to give us our bearings. I thanked them. Gad noted the bearings they called out and muttered, "They're directing us straight to Haifa."

The warship hailed us again. "We believe you are Jews," the voice announced. "We shall follow you. When you enter Palestine waters we shall command you to halt. If you do not comply, I shall use the overwhelming force at my command, if necessary, to board you."

"We understand," I replied.

The cruiser drew off a short distance, but kept us in sight.

Paulo pleaded with Gad. "The people are stifling down there. It's no use keeping them under cover any more. Let them come out."

At last, Gad nodded.

The people stumbled up onto deck. The men crowded the rail, staring at the prim warship.

Nearly a dozen women had fainted. They were carried into the open, worked over by the doctors. Lemons, hoarded throughout the voyage, were now distributed.

People kept pouring up from the holds. Some swayed, their eyes glazed. The women's dresses were patched with perspiration. Most of the men had stripped to the waist.

All day long the warship circled around us. Gad had reduced our progress to a minimum speed, still hoping to try an escape maneuver during the night. The cruiser could not cut its engines down to our speed and was forced to circle us constantly, like an excited hound.

In the afternoon, two more warships appeared.

Our banners had been completed. Gad called to the people, and, as the banners and flag were sent up, they sang the *Hatikvah*. I saw them in their ranks, many whom we had come to know during the voyage, the photographer who had had the developer, the Assyrian-faced poet, a white-haired woman with a sculptural face, our Roumanian capitalist pulling off his cap as the flag went up.

Now Gad gave them their final instructions. There would be no resistance whem the British boarded us, not even a token resistance. There were two reasons for this: first, our ship



contained an unusually high proportion of women and babies. Second, the momentary political situation made resistance inadvisable, according to instructions from Eretz.

All that night the warships kept close to us. And yet a feeling almost of well-being had come over the vessel, a relaxation, for the worst was known.

In the warm night the people encrusted the deck, and there was an atmosphere of expectancy rather than the dismay one might have expected in people who knew they would be arrested in the morning and again put behind barbed wire.

True, there were many who were bitter. One young man came to me and whispered that a group of Etzel sympathizers were planning to resist the British despite orders. The Roumanian doctor and his wife looked desolate. The electrician, too, kept staring at the snapshot of his daughter, whom he had expected to see on the morrow, for he had convinced himself that the ship would succeed in evading the blockade.

Late in the night we discerned a circling beam—it was from Haifa. from Eretz. We were close enough almost to sense the form of the coast; some said they caught the sweet odor of orange groves; it was the picking season.

For Tereska and myself there was a feeling that seemed to belong to all the people on the vessel. We were crowded amongst them for a long time by the rail, and there was a peacefulness amounting to elation in us. We experienced an inexplicable sense of the goodness of the world. The warships around, the troubles that might come tomorrow, the worry over saving the film somehow all diminished to insignificance. We were in the presence of the truth of the indestructibility of human will and human faith. The people, in the truest sense, were arriving at their goal.

* * *

From the beginning of our project to film the Brayha, even while we were yet in New York, there had been endless

discussions of ways to safeguard the negative against seizure by the British. A New York lawyer had suggested constructing a mandolin case with a false bottom. In Paris, Venya had speculated whether Tereska could conceal the film, through her role as a pregnant woman. Since coming aboard we had, of course, repeatedly discussed the problem with Gad.

We had even wondered whether to risk a direct approach to the British. After all, Hesse was a Pathé newscameraman. The British would hesitate before destroying the property of so important a firm. For a while, I leaned to the view that the British, with their strong sense of history, would pause before harming such irreplacable material—after all, they were civilized. Perhaps as a nation, Tereska argued, but how could one tell about the individual corporal into whose hands the film would fall? No, once the film was out of our control, anything might happen to it.

Gad suggested a partial solution. The negative could be hidden on the ship. After the vessel was hauled to the "graveyard" in Haifa harbor, a crew of workers would come aboard to clean it. This was the usual procedure. The workers were Jews. And they'd know where to look.

This method had been used for important material on previous ships, and was considered ninety percent safe. But even if this worked, a serious problem remained. Granted that we could hide everything we had filmed so far—there remained the material we hoped to film, showing the British boarding the vessel, and whatever happened thenceforth. This would be the most dramatic part of our story. How could we hide these last rolls of film, once the British were on the ship?

"In the end," Gad said, "there are always certain things that have to be left to wits, or luck. Perhaps you'll see some Palestine newspaperman you know, and be able to slip it to him—you'll just have to be alert for every chance."

That night I packed all the negative thus far exposed and turned the bulky parcel over to Paulo. "You'll receive it in Haifa," he promised.

A final point worried us. As the British would find us with our cameras, they would surely wonder what had become of our film, and search for it. We decided therefore to prepare some film for them to capture. We had about fifteen rolls of unexposed



negative left; I marked up half the lids as exposed, and left the whole lot in a sack in the cabin.

In the first morning light we saw the gray shape of Mount Carmel. The cruisers closed in. One hailed us. "You are now in Palestine waters. I command you to halt."

The ship was halted. Gad glided out of the wheelhouse, gave me a last message for his wife in Yagur, and disappeared, to mingle with the crowd on deck.

Hesse and I, in our war-correspondent uniforms, took our stand just outside the wheelhouse, filming the warship as it came alongside.

The voice from the ship cautioned against resistance. I called out to them, "It has been decided that no resistance will be offered, owing to the large number of women and children aboard."

All along the rail of the warship, the boarding party stood ready. These men wore leather forearm guards, crash helmets, knee guards; they carried long truncheons. Behind them stood ranks of armed men. The ship's guns were manned.

The voice called out, "Get your people to move back, clear part of the deck to make room for my men to jump." I passed on the request. No one budged. The women sat with their babies in their laps, looking up at the Britons making ready to leap down on them.

A rope was tossed from the warship. Reacting automatically, one of the immigrants caught it, but such a sound of revulsion went up that he dropped the rope as though it were electrically charged. It slipped off the ship.

The warship was now rubbing against the *Unafraid*. One by one, men of the boarding party began to drop. To avoid contact the mass of refugees drew back a foot or two, leaving a narrow passage by the rail. The Britons formed on the little foredeck, and began to push their way through toward the wheelhouse.

One of those in line to jump was hesitating; he made a false start, and finally jumped badly. As he landed on deck his leg snapped, just above the ankle. The Vilna doctor made his way to him, examined the fracture, and provided first aid.

The silence continued all around.

The men reached the wheelhouse. "Start the ship," they were ordered from the cruiser. After some time it became clear that the engines had been sabotaged. A tow was ordered.

All this time, we had continued to film. One of His Majesty's officers now reached the wheelhouse. He stared at us. "What are you fellows doing here?"

I explained that we were newsreel men eager to complete our film record of the voyage. Since there had been no violence, I pointed out, there should be no objection to our film.

"Your film will be confiscated," he warned me.

"In any case let me get it done," I said. "There's nothing derogatory in this scene."

"Yes, I wish they were all like this," he said.

Nothing derogatory? I wondered. If we had filmed a fight, there might have been dramatic scenes of horror. But somehow the very coldness of this operation, the very contrast of the almighty efficient Britons, of the armed men with their self-conscious and slightly arrogant smiles, against the bitterly restrained attitudes of the immigrant men and women, was, to me, equally telling, and perhaps even more powerful than a scene of physical resistance. We worked on, filming the British signalmen reporting the capture of the vessel, filming their faces, their faces.

Now a launch came alongside, and an immigration officer climbed aboard. I produced our passports. We all had perfectly valid visas for Palestine, which I had obtained as the producer of *My Father's House*, and for the announced purpose of making a film about refugees.

The officer handed back the passports, shrugging. I pointed out Tereska and Mika, mingled in the mass of refugees. "Those are my actors. I'd like to shoot the final scene."

He repeated that the film would be taken from us.

The ship was now being warped into the harbor. I recognized every building, every shed. Out there, pressing against the barrier at the entrance to the piers, I knew, would be a crowd of Palestinians who thought their relatives might be aboard this vessel, and who had come as close as they could in the hope of catching a glimpse of them. The electrician's daughter was surely there, and the Roumanian doctor's daughter.

Now the people began to distinguish the Hebrew signs on the



buildings, and they cried out excitedly. "Look, in Hebrew! A Hebrew city!" as though this one glimpse were compensation for all they had been through. They waved their scarves, their handkerchiefs. Workers on the dock were waving to us.

We filmed without halting. The faces of the British, joking as they pulled down our banners. The face of a little boy, staring at Haifa, and then staring at the soldiers.

The mothers sat immobile, holding their babies toward the Jewish city. I heard one murmur, "We will live there some day."

We were filming Tereska and Mika, standing in the midst of the mass, staring with the others at Haifa. I shouted the woman's words to Tereska and she repeated them. "We will live there some day, with our children."

The film was done.

I wanted to prolong the last view for the final fadeout but the police sergeant tapped my shoulder. "Call your people. You're coming off now."

A gangplank had just been laid, and they led us off. Our ship's stern was against the *Empire Rival,* whose barbed-wire cages were waiting for our passengers. We wanted to get one more shot of the people beginning to be moved to the cage-boat. Hesse stooped on the gangplank to reload.

A blue-clad officer stepped up and said testily, "What's he doing?"

"Changing film," I explained. "We'd like to finish our job."

"You've finished!" the furious C.I.D. man exclaimed, and poked Hesse to get moving. An armed guard escorted us from the pier.

We were taken to the port police station. Since the year before, I noticed, there were Arab machinegunners posted around the port.

In a second-floor room, we were told to deposit all our belongings on a table. The crucial shots of the men jumping aboard our ship, the faces of the people as they saw Eretz, the faces of the British soldiers, were all on two rolls of film in my knapsack. The final scenes of the film were in the last Arriflex magazine.

The officer left the room for a moment. I looked out the

window and there, just below, was Judy Avrunin of the *Palestine Post.* She had seen us coming off the ship; now she pantomimed that she had already phoned to get us out. I wondered if I could toss the film to her. But a machinegunner was just behind her.

The C.I.D. man returned, and the interrogation began. I stated my responsibility for the group. The questioning lasted a few hours. Mainly, he wanted to know from where the ship had sailed, but he didn't dispute my right, as a journalist, to safeguard professional confidences.

I stressed as strongly as I could the historic value of the film. "If it had been possible for a cameraman to accompany Moses," I used my old argument, "what would you think of a power that destroyed his film?"

As far as he was concerned, the inspector said wearily, he would have dismissed us, with our film. But he had to wait for instructions from Jerusalem.

He had some sandwiches sent up for lunch. He called in my companions, and shared his food with us.

We asked to be permitted to get our belongings off the ship. Finally two guards escorted me to the vessel.

The operation had been forwarded with the rapidity of oft-repeated routine. More than forty vessels had given them experience. All of the immigrants were by now off the *Unafraid;* most of them were already in the cages of the *Empire Rival;* the remainder moved slowly toward the ship, between two rows of paratroopers.

Every bit of their belongings had been taken from them and tossed into a pile on the pier. The baggage was being processed by a row of soldiers at a long table. They tore through the pitiful little bundles and knapsacks, pulling out the last keepsakes, the family photographs, letters, mementos; certain categories of possessions were thrown into a discard pile—tins of food, rolls of film, tools, the radio man's precious kit.

I was marched onto the *Unafraid.* A policeman stood before our cabin door. He unlocked it.

Inside was a shambles. A few stray bits of clothing lay trampled on the floor; suitcases lay open, empty. The Eyemo was gone, case and all. My briefcase was gone. Only the heavier satchel of spotlights remained, and a few worthless items. And in a corner



I saw Tereska's coat—it was her French Army overcoat. The large buttons had been neatly sliced off, obviously for examination.

Under the bunks I picked up a precious roll of exposed color film that must have slipped out of the hands of the searchers.

I protested the theft of the camera and our personal property.

"Why, the refugees must have got in here," the C.I.D. man said blandly. "You know how they are. Steal the nails off your fingers."

If it was the refugees, I suggested, then everything was still right out there in the baggage heap on the dock. "Why don't you instruct your men to look for the camera. They're not likely to miss an item like that."

"That's impossible," he growled, hustling me off the ship. As we passed the line of refugees, I saw the Vilna doctor. "All our things are gone," I called out.

"Soldiers came in while I was still there," he said, "and began moving things out."

The guards pushed me along.

Loot is loot.

At the end of the pier stood an Army Command trailer. As we passed it, an officer called out to my C.I.D. man, "You want this?"

He produced the sack of film that I had left in the cabin, all prepared for them.

"What about our camera and clothes?" I said.

"I told you, the immigrants got all that!" We returned to police headquarters. The officer opened the sack and sorted out the film boxes, putting those marked "exposed" in a separate pile. After a time, he left the room again. The sentinel at the door seemed uncurious about us. I approached the table where all the film lay. I took the last two rolls we had shot; these boxes were unmarked, and on a hunch I slipped them into the stack of unexposed boxes. If ever I got a chance to claim back my unexposed film, these vital scenes might fall into my hands.

There remained only the undischarged magazine. I had little hope of saving that.

Now the officer returned with final instructions from Jerusalem. All our film material was to be sent there for review.

I protested. There were no proper facilities for developing motion pictures in Palestine, and the material would surely be ruined. I insisted that it be sent by air for development in England, again stressing its historic value. The officer promised to forward my request.

As for us, the men would be held, but the young woman would he put in the charge of the Jewish Agency's immigration officer, Mr. Dostrovsky. They led Tereska away.

Normally, we would have been taken to the city jail in the Arab quarter, but the situation in Haifa was bad, indeed the war for Palestine had unofficially begun, and even the British recognized that Jews could not be left in the Arab jail. We were taken to a Jewish neighborhood police station on Hadar Ha-Carmel.

The station contained a single cell, about the size of an ordinary bedroom; some ten men were there. The atmosphere was quite cheerful, and, as we provided the basic facts of our history, we were immediately accepted as comrades. The boys had a supply of chocolate and oranges, and they assured us sandwiches and coffee would be along in a few minutes, as the Prisoners' Aid was on the job. Things were a bit crowded, but, as we had just come off a ship, we would be used to that. Otherwise the jail was agreeable.

We began to make the acquaintance of our fellow prisoners Most of them were long-limbed Haganah youngsters arrested for carrying weapons. Two of these, lads of seventeen, seemed to be regarded as heroes. An older man began telling me their story. They had been on duty in an isolated Jewish house in the Arab quarter, to provide protection while the few remaining Jewish families in the area were evacuated, and, also, to keep the street open for Jewish busses. For three days this pair had held their fortress against Arab fire from all sides. Finally the Arabs had tossed incendiary bombs on the roof; as the boys ran out of the flaming house a passing British patrol had arrested them for carrying weapons.

"Be fair, Papa," one of the youngsters joked. "After all, the British didn't shoot at us."

It hadn't sounded like a nickname when he said, "Papa." They were, in fact, father and son. Coincidence had brought them into the same cell. "You want a hero?" the boy said.



"Here is my father." The father, a harbor worker, was a member of the Volunteer Fire Brigade. Last night he had been sent on a mission with one of the very important officers of the unit. Naturally, there had been a pistol in the car, and it had been agreed beforehand that the higher official was to have no responsibility for the weapon in case they were caught. The car had been stopped, the pistol found, and here was Papa.

I wondered at their insouciance, as possession of arms, under the emergency code, was punishable even by death.

"Oh, they'll probably only give us a life sentence—till May 15th!" they laughed.

The date of the British evacuation was awaited as millenium.

"Don't underestimate the British. They'll make you finish your sentence in the Tower of London," declared someone at the grille. It was a moon-faced emissary from the Prisoners' Aid, bearing a huge hamper of food and a gallon can of hot tea. He already knew of our arrival and assured us that everything would be done to get us out. Even before May 15th.

"We'll all get out, everybody!" insisted a jumpy little man in shirtsleeves who had taken authority over the hamper of sandwiches and was busily sharing them out. "May 15th!"

But he and the young lad beside him were obviously not quite included amongst the heroes; they were jailbirds, unmistakable anywhere—the habitual thief and his fag. Yet in these curious times they shared something of glory, in being prisoners of the British. Weren't they Jews in jail? As for a little robbery—terrorists, too, committed robberies, and were no less patriots!

That evening a burly worker came to the gate and asked for me by name. "We have your package," he informed me, grinning. "Everything is safe. We'll deliver it to you at the hotel when you get out of here."

The film was safe, then. At last we could sleep in peace.

There were a few straw mattresses—supplied by the Prisoners' Aid—on the floor, and we all managed to find room to lie down.

The week of jail, aside from the constant sniping in the streets all around us, proved restful and relaxing. Our meals were brought over from Weis's hotel a few blocks away; there were tremendous quantities of soups, roasts, puddings, cakes.

As most of the police in this station were Jewish, our incarceration was only formal. During the days we were permitted to pass our time in the garden—all but the two thieves, who howled bitterly at this discrimination.

But on the second day there was disquieting news. It came with three Americans who were led into the cell. Obviously veteran crewmen of illegal ships, they announced that they had spent four months in Cyprus and two months in Athlit detention camp and that they had been brought to town to be deported, at last. While helping themselves to the Haganah boys' private store of candy, they told how they had that morning passed through the downtown Arab jail. "Imagine the gentlemen British—that jail is too dangerous for us, but they've got a Jewish girl in there. She was brought in while we were there. She's French."

It was indeed Tereska. The British had thought better of their leniency, and arrested her. Since there were no women's quarters in our station, they had prefered to risk her life rather than her honor, and put her in the Arab jail. Even the Prisoners' Aid couldn't get to her down there, but calls were immediately put through to the French consulate, and cables sent to Paris.

It was Christmas day. Most of the British police around the station were quite friendly, hanging around the cell door, joking with us, speculating on where they would get jobs after they left Palestine. Their one concern was to keep their skins whole until May 15th.

That night, however, one of them got drunk and came around to the cell trying to provoke a fight. "Come on, Yank, come on out here man to man. Are you coming out or you want me to come in and get you? I'm getting the key."

We were silent. A drunk, with a pistol. Afterward it could be explained as an action during an attempted escape of terrorists.

He came back, waving the key, and resumed his abuse. Luckily a comrade of his turned up and offered him a drink.

Sniping continued, everywhere in Haifa. On a roof nearby, a woman was killed by a stray bullet as she was hanging out



washing. When we went into the garden we hugged the walls. Visitors brought us news. The situation in the city was growing worse, hourly. Busses going from the upper to the lower part of town were fired upon as they passed through the Arab quarter.

The main road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv was cut; only a few armored busses made the trip, and not every day. Even the road from Tel Aviv to Haifa, which passed almost entirely through Jewish settlements was not safe. The worst was that the British while themselves refusing to maintain safety, would not permit the Haganah to protect the roads.

By morning, the French consulate had secured Tereska's release on bail, and she came to visit us, attired in borrowed clothes. Tereska regarded our condition with scorn. She had been in a real jail. She had been placed in a communal cell with Arab women, thieves, prostitutes, murderesses; but they had understood the word, "Paris," and had immediately taken a great affection to her. They had communicated in pantomime, making steps with their hands to show how many children they had, and beating their breasts to prove their desolation. But they had also danced and sung for her. She had not been able to eat the prison food of rancid olives and cold pittah, but otherwise everything had been fine, except for the terror of being without contact, alone.

As the days passed there were changes in the population of our cell. The older Haganah man was to go on trial. His wife appeared, a neat little woman with a high, idealistic forehead; she exchanged gossip with husband and son about their friends outside and handed them fresh laundry. Not a breath of worry.

In two hours the father was back, elated. His had been something of a test case under a new regulation, and he was free with only a comparatively small fine! Perhaps the boy, too, would be free in a few days!

The Americans had dubbed the two boys the Terrorists, and started an endless sex discussion around them. The Terrorists were suspected of being virgins. "In Eretz," growled Harry, a ship's

engineer from Newark, "they give these kids guns before they are even men."

"Nonsense!" his Bronx companion insisted. "In the kibbutzim they are paired off at the age of sixteen."

"Not true," one of the Terrorists responded solemnly. "Not sixteen. A Jew becomes a man at thirteen. Here in Eretz we observe our traditions." Nevertheless he was blushing.

Our two thieves had got into a tiff. They were now bent on confessing against each other, each claiming he had been betrayed by his comrade. Actually they had broken into a clothing store during curfew, piled a few thousands dollars' worth of goods onto a truck, hauled the stuff away, and sold it to an Arab. They felt they ought to get credit for breaking the British curfew.

The real crime, in the eyes of the Terrorists, was that the thieves had sold the goods to an Arab. And for nothing.

Late one afternoon a slender young man was brought in. The British officer parted from him cheerily. "I'd have never caught you, chum, if you'd had any sense." The young man had been arrested in a simple street-check. He had been carrying a paper parcel which turned out to contain five revolvers. Had he stopped and shown his identity papers he could probably have got through with his parcel unopened; but he had taken fright and begun to run.

The boys surrounded him. "What are you, Etzel or Lechi?"

He was Etzel.

The Americans dubbed him, "The Real Terrorist," and informed the Haganah lads that they had lost standing. But on the following day even The Real Terrorist was eclipsed. A Yemenite was brought in; he wore a torn shirt and broken shoes; a constant, childlike smile, at once friendly and diffident, was on his face. In monosyllables, with each sentence ending in a shy laugh, he told his story. He was there for stabbing a girl.

"A dark one, chabub?"

"Dark."

"Your sweetheart?"

His grin broadened.

"And why did you stab her, yadid?"

For five pounds that her father had offered him.

"Her father wanted you to kill her?"



The Yemenite nodded eagerly. "She was bad."

"How, bad?"

"She went with the English."

"Aha. And still, she was your girl?"

"Ah, no. Before, she was my girl." After she went with the English he would not have her. He saw no more of her.

And how had his trouble come about, then?

The father had come to him, asking him to punish the girl. And so last night he had gone to her room to punish her.

"You drank some arak, chabub?"

He nodded; his eyes were shining as he recounted the event. The Englishman was away on duty. In the darkness, he had felt the girl's form, there on the bed, and he had brought down his knife. Then someone had awakened, screaming, and people had come, and he had been arrested.

"You killed her, chabub."

"No. Only a wound."

"Too much arak, chabibi?"

"And it wasn't she."

"Not she?"

"No." His voice dropped, as he regretfully explained his failure. The girl friend of his ex-sweetheart had come to spend the night with her, and it was this friend whom his knife had found.

"A bad job, chabub."

But he raised his head. His cheerful smile had returned. When he got out he would do the job properly.

Did he have a pistol? the boys asked.

Oh yes. Two. But a knife was better.

And to which Irgun did he belong, Etzel or Lechi?

"Lechi," he replied, shyly, looking around to see whether this was approved.

When the food came the Yemenite waited until the last, as though he didn't expect that he, too, was included in the distribution.

One day the sniping around us died down. A truce had been arranged between Jews and Arabs. Haifa had always been the best example of co-operation between the two peoples, and,

despite infiltration of Arab terrorists, the peace faction amongst the Arabs still felt it could hold control.

The truce was regarded triumphantly as an omen. Perhaps it could be extented over the whole plain of Acre, and then to Galilee. Once the British were out of the way—

But on the second day the truce was broken. From a passing truck, a bomb was thrown at a group of Arab workers at the gates of the refinery. Some said the bomb came from Etzel hotheads, some said it was thrown by an Arab or English provocateur—but the result was to unleash a massacre. Arab workers in the refinery, several times outnumbering the Jews, went berserk. With iron bars and hammers they smashed to death more than twenty Jewish workers. The butchery went on for hours; the nearby forces of law and order reacted with traditional tardiness. The bodies, with unidentifiable faces, were brought out the next day, and as they were taken in open trucks along the streets of Hadar HaCarmel, for burial, we heard a wailing that arose from the whole mountain, voices as from the ancient days when Israel bewailed Jerusalem, long, low, and rising cries from the very marrow of an endlessly bleeding people.

There were many indications, it was said, that the massacre had been prepared and provoked, for even terrorists would not have struck so wantonly against the Arabs. In any case, if such a massacre was left unpunished, there would be others. Therefore a Palmach punishing expedition went out that night against the village where most of the murderers lived, the long familiar Wallad El Sheikh, by Yagur. And in jail the news came to us that one of the Palmach squad had been killed—Chayim Bendor.

There had been a massacre on the Jerusalem road also. After a great deal of complaint and pressure, the British had declared they would open the road and keep it safe for travel. A number of cars containing important Jewish Agency officials had set out from Jerusalem for Tel Aviv. On the winding mountain road they had been ambushed, and several had been slain, including the director of youth immigration, Hans Beyth. The promised British patrol arrived afterward—and attempted to arrest the surviving Jews for carrying arms.



On the seventh day we were released from jail on a deportation order and high bond. We walked to the Carmelia Court Hotel; the manager, who had played a small role in *My Father's House,* greeted us warmly. The hotel, situated at a meeting-point of Jewish and Arab sectors, had become a Haganah citadel. Tuvia Arazi, one of the Agency's experts on Arab relations, was still carrying on his efforts to re-establish the truce in the Haifa area. But the British were permitting Fawzi El Kawakji's men to filter in from Syria, even while they were trying to denude the Jews of weapons, and in the face of this the Arab peace factions had little hold on their countrymen.

More than once Haganah boys had recaptured, from the Arabs, the very guns which the British had confiscated from the Haganah. In every neighboring country the Arabs were openly preparing to march into Palestine and massacre Jews. Those who wanted peace scarcely dared speak. The Arab Legion of course already had units in the land. The Mufti was preparing in Egypt, Kawakji was preparing in Syria, enlisting ex-German officers to train his troops. On the day the English left Palestine there would be an effort to sweep the Jews into the sea. And if the effort proved successful, the world would no doubt accept it, though with appropriate words of regret at the further decimation of the Jews.

"And what about us?" I asked Tuvia. "Are we getting any stuff in?" He raised one shoulder and one eyebrow. "A little."

"Do you think we can manage?"

"What choice have we got?"

We had a few days of freedom before deportation. Our one chance to recover the closing scenes of our film was in the C.I.D.'s headquarters in Jerusalem. Tereska and I set out by way of Tel Aviv.

We had been over the seacoast road so many times during the filming of *My Father's House* that we knew every orange grove, every village. Just up there on the slope of Mount Carmel we had once stationed ourselves with a camera to catch a road-shot of passing traffic. But we had not realized how utterly easy it would be for someone to sit on that very slope, behind a rock, and snipe at passing cars.

No one in the outside world could feel how it was for a population to live through such a situation, month after month, everyone knowing that in his ordinary daily routine, in his normal movement, he exposed himself as completely as a soldier in war entering a hostile town full of snipers. What soldiers went through in the space of a few hours, until a town was secure, the Jewish population endured without respite for several years.

In Tel Aviv, no one was certain when the next convoy would be going to Jerusalem. At the Gat Rimon Hotel, that evening, we found Golda Mayerson, who had just made another trip on the besieged road though she had been in the ambushed party a few days ago, when Hans Beyth had been killed.

Stable, controlled, she was the very personification of Jewish endurance, at the same time exuding a warmth and motherliness that seemed great enough to embrace the entire Yishuv. Surely she ranked among the world's great women.

Golda told how she had remained on the road with a young Haganah girl after the attack had been repulsed, for the only car still in operation had been used to rush the wounded back to Jerusalem. The British patrol had found her and the girl at the scene of action. "They ordered the girl to come with them to the station," Golda said, with her remote, patient smile. That would, of course, have meant a search and the discovery of arms. "I said if they took her they'd have to take me, too. Well, the officer was a little uncertain. He sat there in the tower of his tank and kept calling back to his headquarters. I suppose I was an embarrassment. Finally he said neither of us had to go."

She dismissed the incident.

"And after May 15th?" I asked.

"We'll try to protect ourselves. What choice have we got?"

I recalled a time some years ago when Golda had travelled on a mission through the United States, quietly soliciting amongst wealthy Jews for a special fund for the purchase of Haganah weapons. For years that work had been progressing toward this day. But was the result anything like enough? Had it amounted to much more than the mortars the British had unearthed at Yagur?

Yes, there was more... and my friend Yitzhak Chizik had been to the States recently to purchase planes. Of course, getting them



into Palestine would be difficult. But we would fight with what we had. "Ain brayrah. Do we have any choice?"

That was always the blank wall. After the world's prolonged debates, the score of committees of enquiry, after all the forewarnings, the inevitable would come.

She sighed a little, and raised her head. "And your film?"

I told her we would have to try to get our scenes out of Jerusalem.

"I think there will be a convoy tomorrow," she said. She, too, was going up.

There was a convoy. The places in the two armored busses were already taken. However, taxi seats were available. Tereska refused to be left behind.

By nine-thirty the convoy had formed. It consisted of a station wagon, an armored bus, our taxi and one other, and, finally, the second armored bus followed by a truck.

In all my experiences in Palestine, no incident seemed more flagrantly to reveal the nature of those British who ruled the country. For here was a road about forty miles long, normally the busiest traffic artery in the country. Normally there were several busses every hour, and a dozen passenger-car services making constant trips. Virtually the entire food supply for Jerusalem, a mountaintop city, had to come over this road.

A dozen tanks in constant patrol could have kept the road open and safe. The mere knowledge that the British meant to protect the road would have sufficed. At the time, the British still accepted responsibility to keep order in Palestine—for months to come. Had they declared themselves incapable of protecting this road and turned the task over to the Haganah before the Arab forces could entrench themselves along it, and mine it, and blow up stretches of it, the road would have been saved. But the British in Palestine pretended that the might of their empire could not guarantee this bit of road against a few groups of Arab terrorists, and they refused to permit the Jews to protect themselves. In effect, they abetted the siege of Jerusalem long before they left Palestine.

Jews were instructed to apply to the authorities whenever they wanted to send a convoy on the road, but they were invariably

told that protection was not available at the time. Consequently, when they ventured out in their own convoys and were attacked, the British were "not responsible".

A few Jewish supernumerary police, armed with rifles, were sometimes permitted to accompany the convoys. All other arms were illegal. In each bus, there would be a few boys and girls carrying sections of homemade Sten guns. When the convoys entered the danger zones, a girl would bring the stock from under her skirt, a boy would pull the magazine from inside his shirt, the weapon would be snapped together, and there would be additional firepower for the convoy.

The taxis were more precarious. In ours, a Haganah lad sat beside the driver; he had a long-barreled German pistol, but whenever we passed through stretches where the British might be on patrol he handed the pistol to Tereska to be hidden. With us sat a young girl. She had a cardboard "cakebox" which she carefully set on the floor within easy reach.

We took a long, roundabout way, sometimes passing across fields. This by-pass later became part of the "Burma road" to Jerusalem.

We approached an Arab village. The road narrowed; at a turning, Arab children mimicked machineguns at us. A villager sauntered by with his pistol in plain sight. But we roared through unmolested.

After Hulda—where Ephraim Chizik had died heroically in 1929—we passed through a small stretch of woods. A figure in a long shepherd's gown stepped out from the woods; momentarily, we took fright as he waved his tommygun. But our Haganah lad yelled a Hebrew greeting to him. The woods had been a nasty spot until a few days ago, the Haganah girl beside us explained.

We came up behind Latrun, where there was a British military checkpost. Once more all the weapons were put out of sight. A Tommy came along, poked his head in at the window, and passed on.

Having by-passed the Arab-held area, the convoy reached the upper part of the Jerusalem main road. We had to halt just then, for a British military convoy was going by. It seemed endless, with gun carriers, tanks, reconn cars, weapons carriers,



every sort of armor. Yet they didn't have a vehicle to spare to protect civilian traffic on the road.

Nothing had ever seemed so exposed, to me, as our little convoy. Going through Europe's battlefields in an open jeep had given me no such feeling of insecurity. Here we were walled on both sides by mountains, and from any rock above us grenades might be tossed. Our driver remarked that even the armored busses had no top protection. A single vehicle put out of commission would block everything behind it long enough for a massacre to take place. And at any turn we might run into a roadblock.

Our only protection was the Arab fear of firepower from our armored busses. And what did that amount to? Eight to nine tommyguns in the entire convoy, and some cakeboxes of grenades, and some pistols.

Now the girl beside us slipped a tiny Mauser out of her handbag.

At every turn, she and the Haganah boy recognized landmarks. Here, a driver had been killed, and here, the road had once been mined, and from there grenades had been thrown, and up ahead there had once been an ambush.

No, I thought, I was through. I couldn't endure war any more.

Then the other taxi stalled with motor trouble.

Naturally, our driver explained, the companies would not risk their good cars on the Jerusalem road.

"Naturally," the Haganah boy said. "Better to risk our lives."

For twenty minutes we all sat there, exposed, till the car was repaired.

The drive that ordinarily took an hour took six hours. But as we arrived in Jerusalem we saw the news running ahead of us all along the street—"The convoy got through today! the convoy got through!"

The familiar Eden Hotel was so completely deserted that Lifschitz honored us with the suite with the bath. We started telephoning to lawyers, to the French and American consulates, to help us get back our film. Bernard Joseph's office managed

to get the American consulate to secure an appointment with the C.I.D. chief, Mr. Catling.

The police headquarters appeared more formidable than ever. Again rebuilt, it was now encircled by two barbed-wire fences, raised to twenty feet high, as a precaution against the latest terrorist trick of rolling barrels of dynamite from the tops of passing trucks.

The checkpost was just opposite the spot where I had stood a year ago, feeling I was before a firing line.

We passed through several control-points, and were at last within the gloomy headquarters. An Arab policeman led us upstairs to the office of the chief. I couldn't help feeling the final horror these corridors must have held for any Haganah lad or any young terrorist in the toils of the C.I.D.; even the stairwells were filled with barbed wire, to prevent escape.

Mr. Catling received us with icy decorum. I repeated that the film would be ruined if developed in Palestine, and, if it had to be censored, asked that it be sent by air to England.

Perhaps, said Mr. Catling. If it wasn't too bulky.

Suddenly I saw my chance. Half the material was unexposed, I said. No point in sending that. The rest would make a small package.

He considered for a moment, and agreed. We could pick up our unexposed film tomorrow.

Tereska caught my eye for the briefest instant. We never smiled. Until the next day we didn't stop plotting. In the unexposed pile we hoped to get the two rolls showing the British boarding the ship. But how could we get the final roll, still in the magazine?

The C.I.D. had our three magazines, which were numbered by bits of adhesive tape. In Haifa, the officer had written down the number of the exposed magazine. Could we somehow switch the numbers?

I went out and bought a roll of adhesive tape. But Tereska said no, the tape on the magazine was wider. I got wider tape. I cut little pieces, and wrote numbers on them. If the chance came, I could paste these over the old numbers. All the way to the C.I.D. fort I tried to remember—Number one is in my right trouser pocket, number two the left, number three in the right jacket pocket.



We were escorted to another office, where we found the C.I.D. officer from Haifa. He opened a locker and produced the sack of film. "We found something else of yours," he said, handing me my briefcase that had been in the ship's cabin. But the money—some three hundred dollars—and the papers it had contained had "not been found". Nor any of our other property.

Now he opened the sack of film. The boxes marked, "Exposed", he set aside. I began to put the unexposed rolls into my briefcase.

For a second the officer seemed suspicious. Was there any way he could be sure these rolls were unexposed? he asked.

Holding my breath, I opened the box in my hand. I was lucky. I showed him that the original black paper wrapping inside was unbroken. He nodded, satisfied.

The two rolls were safe. Now came the magazines. He seemed to have forgotten that he had written down the number of the exposed magazine, for he asked me again, "Which is exposed?"

I blinked. Was he deliberately giving me a chance to recover the film? "I don't remember which is exposed," I said.

"Is there any way to tell?"

"In a darkroom, I could tell."

"We have a darkroom here," he said. "Suppose you take them to the darkroom."

An Arab guard was sent with me. In the photo lab, he switched off the light. I unloaded the crucial magazine, slipped the exposed film under my shirt. Then we went back. I turned in the blank magazine.

"I hope you have better luck with your next film," the C.I.D. man said as we left.

"Oh, I don't know," I couldn't help replying. "We may still come out all right on this one."

He glanced up. I added hastily, "I'm sure the London censors will give it back to us."

We carried our material past the three checkposts. Once outside the barbed-wire enclosure, I felt like running.

Our lawyer was waiting for us at the bus station; there was

a convoy leaving, and this time we had places in the armored bus.

The bus was filled with young men, several of them Yemenites, leaving Jerusalem "for a hike"—military training. They sang all the way to Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile Tereska and I discussed the morality of our act. Should we have scruples about having deceived the C.I.D. man? But, I argued, we had only stolen back what was ours...

Finally we were able to listen to ourselves, and we laughed. Jews!

In Haifa we at last assembled our parcels of film. We sat gazing, incredulous. All! Down to the last roll, the last foot we had exposed! Our feat gave us a sense of omnipotence. The history of the whole film came together now, from the impossibility of getting visas to Poland to the impossibility of saving the film from the British. We were certainly not adventurers by nature, and yet we had somehow carried this out, and we had seen people all along the way carrying out improbable, incredible things.

It gave us a peculiar, heady emotion, a sense of another reality. For everything was real. Everything could be done. The maddest schemes, tied together by the flimsiest connections, could be carried out. It was not only our own experience that counted in this impression; for months we had been living within the experience of people whose every day was a succession of improbabilities; we had been with border runners, paper falsifiers; and not only their present lives but the very fact of their being alive belonged to this other reality. They had survived the probabilities, the certainties of many deaths.

We would never again in our lives believe that any plan was totally impractical, that any idea was too difficult to carry out, or that the every-day rules were the rules of life.

Now we comprehended the view of the plotter who is bent on his own secret, improbable plan. We saw that the chances are altogether with the plotter, for the world watches the routine, the probable. The plotter could always escape, because the searchers could not see into his mind. We were beginning to peep into that other world of terror and incredible action where



lived those who performed acts of conspiracy and resistance. For the truck-high, barbed-wire fence was built only after the truck with the explosives had accomplished its mission, and the fence was not yet built that would prevent what was next in the mind of the conspirator.

But beyond this perception was our own elation, our feeling of joy in the undefeatable human spirit. There was no sense that we, as individuals, had achieved what had to be done, but rather an impersonal joy in the human spirit that could steadfastly follow through the most complex pattern of activities to accomplish its objective and make itself complete in the end.

But now that we had the negative we had to get it out of Palestine. It was possible that our belongings might again be searched on our departure. The Haganah boys said they couldn't control anything at the airfield. But if we sent film by sea, they could get it onto a ship without its passing through customs.

We decided to send Mika by boat with the film, while the rest of us returned to Paris by air to begin assembling the European part.

That evening we packed the negative in a suitcase. I had just managed to close the lid when there was a knock on the door. Two C.I.D. officers had come to return our passports and instruct us as to our departure.

They sat down. One of them put his feet on the suitcase containing the film. It was too much like a scene out of a B picture now, and Tereska couldn't bear the situation any further. She went into the bathroom, shuddering with suppressed nervous laughter.

Eventually the officer lifted off his feet, and the two of them departed. We hustled the suitcase to the room of the Haganah port worker who was to get it onto Mika's ship in the morning.

Back in Paris, I reported to the European chief of Brayha operations. He was an elder settler from Kinnereth. His belly shook as he had me repeat how we had got the negative out of the C.I.D headquarters.

While Mika was crossing the Mediterranean, I went to Italy

and dug the second part of the film out of Claire Neikind's kitchen. The rest was still in Ziggie's foot locker in Prague.

By now we were out of funds. I had just managed to shoot the entire film on the first ten thousand dollars advanced me. I felt sure I had enough material for a feature, and wrote the sponsors for the remaining fifteen thousand, to cover laboratory and sound costs. Meanwhile I cashed my last war bond, so as to lose no time in our work.

Mika arrived with the suitcase. We rushed it to the laboratory. The next day we had our first look at our work. It was good. Everything was there, to the last look at Haifa.

It was then mid-January. Our concern was to get this material before the widest world audience as quickly as possible. Pathé News immediately released a special capsule version of the voyage and capture of the *Unafraid*. We went to several theaters to watch the audiences. The effect was overwhelming. That five minutes on the screen did more to explain the Jewish problem than years of talk. At last the public saw the faces of the people, at last they witnessed the exodus itself.

The newsreels, released world-wide, showed the great possibilities in our material. But now began the most dreadfully illuminating part of our experience.

Time was of the essence; I could not possibly hope to complete the long film before summer, but a two-reel film could be an immediate political bomb. I put aside the feature to make a twenty-minute film of the *Voyage of the Unafraid*.

There was another major consideration. A short film could be booked at once into any theater. We could quickly reach the everyday movie audience in the tens of millions. We could for once get the Jewish story before non-Jews.

And it wasn't only that we had to tell the factual story of British still halting Jewish immigrant ships. The real effect of the film was contained in two words of reaction that I heard over and over from French audiences watching the newsreel. "Quel courage!"

This was the possible deep achievement of our material. For this was the only antidote to anti-Semitism—human respect. In those two reels of film, I felt, would be the most useful work of my life.

In ten days I rushed a finished copy to New York.



I think I can say quite objectively that the short film was overwhelming. This had little relation to ability or lack of ability on the part of the makers. No one could have failed to secure great material on that vessel. One had only to point the camera. Every face was an epic.

The British halted another immigrant ship, and I thought—what a tie-up for the film! I imagined it already running in theater chains. It would be evoking powerful editorial comment in the press, sermons, remarks in Washington.

And then I received a letter from the executive secretary of the sponsoring organization. He was holding up the film. He was wondering whether it should be released at all, since we had a feature coming along in a few months. Maybe the business of the feature would suffer.

I cabled, wrote, pleading that our feature, a long historical documentary about Jewish troubles, could never reach one percent of the audience of the short film. With Palestine aflame, with world public opinion an urgent factor, weeks dribbled away in argument while this potent film lay in New York as effectively withheld from the public as though it had remained in the C.I.D. locker in Jerusalem.

It was not only our work that was being lost. All the people who had helped us, women who had lain in the hold with their babies under the added heat of our lights, people who had accepted added discomfort in the faith that what we were doing might show Jewry's plight, indeed everyone who had ever made the illegal voyage was in a sense being betrayed. "Yes, show them, show the world!" they had so often said to us, in the forests, in the camps, in the fetid hold of the ship.

Finally I cabled that I was halting work on the long film, unless the *Voyage of the Unafraid* was released. I was answered that it was "enjoying phenomenal demand".

I assumed—unfortunately—that the secretary had at last released the film to the theaters. Meanwhile it had become urgent to leave for Prague. The Czech revolution was taking place, and all of our Polish negative still lay in Ziggie's bedroom.

It was illegal for undeveloped film to be taken out of Czecho-Slovakia, and I didn't want to risk censorship by having the film developed in Prague. The only solution was to smuggle out the negative.

I tried to phone Ziggie from Paris. There was no reply. In Paris, all sorts of tales were in the air—the Czech border was sealed, Americans in Prague were suspect, their homes were being searched, etc. I had a vision of excited citizen-police breaking into Ziggie's apartment and finding a mysterious trunk marked in English, "Exposed undeveloped film"!

Tereska haunted the Czech consulate for visas. She told them a beautiful story of our having had our romance in Prague, and wanting to return there for our honeymoon. Somehow she got the visas, despite the revolution and my being an American.

We passed the border with no difficulty and entered Prague on the day after the putsch. It had, of course, been a cold revolution and everything was quiet, except for the loud speakers incessantly blaring propaganda into the streets. Ziggie was home. The film was unmolested.

Before leaving Prague I went to the Haganah office. Things were awfully tight; the Brayha bridge near Bratislava was closed, for fear that government enemies might use it as an escape route.

One of the boys, hearing that we were passing through Germany, gave me a package for a friend of his in Munich. I put it in a suitcase.

We loaded our negative into the car and drove to the border. The same army officer as at our entry was in control. He put everything out on the road—camera cases, lights, clothing, and the souvenir dishware we had bought in Prague. He was hesitant about the film equipment. I pulled out a document which I had fortunately secured from the government film combine, as I had sold them the Czech rights to *The Voyage of the Unafraid.* The fact that I had dealings with the film combine seemed to satisfy him. Still, he wanted one more look. And bending over a suitcase, he extracted the package the Brayha lad had sent with me.

"What's this?"

Suddenly I realized that in the tense situation the fellow in Prague might have sent important papers with me. Slowly, the officer opened the package. I held my breath. Suppose now he should decide to open everything—the film tins—

The wrapping was off. A few cans of sardines, a piece of butter, some cake, and a sausage.

The officer had smelled the food inside the suitcase.



"It is forbidden to take our food to the Germans," he said sternly.

I didn't even argue that it was destined for Jewish refugees. "Please keep it," I said. His eyes lighted. As for the rest, he waved. We could take our stuff and go.

I shoved the film into the car. The worst was over.

On our way back we had only to smuggle Mika into Austria to complete the Alps-crossing scene; and then we stopped in Marseilles for another scene we had missed. And at the Brayha headquarters we saw a familiar-looking girl—Miriam, from the *Unafraid,* back for her next ship.

Slyly she asked, "Why did you leave a letter of recommendation from Moshe Shertok among the papers they found on the ship? You know, since the C.I.D. saw you had got into Poland and Hungary, they decided a letter from Moshe was enough to raise the iron curtain for you."

And how could she know about the C.I.D.'s conclusions?

Miriam laughed. "You're not the only one that can get things out of the C.I.D.," she said.

Now at last we could put *The Illegals* together. I have told in detail about the complexities of getting around Europe, not so much to illustrate what we learned of expediency, but to show the strange postwar state of Europe, laced and interlaced with borders, zones, forbidden areas, restrictions within restrictions.

Later, I made a map to be inserted in *The Illegals;* it had no names of countries, only a lacework of barbed-wire borders. The distributor of the film objected. "But we never know where the people are." Yet this map was Europe in the minds or our people, a shape intercrossed with frontiers. We ourselves, in making the film, though possessed of good documents, credentials, contacts, and with helpers at every turn—we ourselves in the end absorbed the barrier-psychology of the people we filmed.

Like the exodus from Egypt, the Brayha is part of every Jew's experience, and it was the object of the film, as it is partly the

object of this account, to bring him to live through it, to take it into himself.

There was mail waiting in Paris. A letter from the sponsoring organization. They had still judged it best not to release the film to the general public! The "phenomenal demand" about which I had been cabled was at Jewish meetings, where it was being shown in sixteen millimeters. All of five prints had been ordered! The order was being increased!

Against every obstacle we had been able to succeed. Against bureaucratic complacency there was no defense.

With so much time lost, the best hope of getting our material before the public now seemed in the long film, for the people in New York seemed to be hypnotized by the thought of releasing a feature.

The war for Israel was now in the open. Every day, as we hurried to complete *The Illegals,* the place names of the battles in Israel haunted us. Now the Egyptians were storming Nirim, the colony in the Negev whose founding we had filmed as the end of *My Father's House.* I could see the leader of the kibbutz, with his long, serious face, sending his comrades to their defense posts. And incredibly, they were withstanding the onslaught of what sounded like the entire Egyptian force. Nirim still held.

The Palestinians who were stuck in Paris with their jobs of getting supplies, of getting men on to Israel, repeated the tales of battle to each other, and legends grew. How had Nirim, a handful, repulsed a whole army? Boys from the colony had slipped out at night, dressed as Arabs, they said, and, mixing with the Arab soldiers in their camp, had told tales of the atom bomb possessed by the Jews. And at strange noises from the settlement, the Arabs had fled. I recalled how I had once sat with the mukhtar of Nirim, having coffee with the Arabs, and it was true, he spoke well enough to pass for one of them. Perhaps the tale was true. How else could they have survived such an attack?

Then it was Kinnereth, where we had filmed Ronnie with his donkey. The Syrians had come with a dozen tanks and driven



into the very yard of Dagania, one of the three colonies by the lake. They had been stopped by bottles of gasoline. And here too there was a tale of how at night the colonists had sent cars to come winding down the hill behind them, with their lights on, over and over, so as to give the impression of great reinforcements arriving and the Arabs had been frightened by the ruse, and withdrawn.

Then we read of the Egyptians coming through Beersheba, reaching Ramat Rachel, at the edge of Jerusalem, where they were to link up with the Arab Legion. This was the colony where we had filmed the children's room, now a scene of battle. I had seen the English drag men by their hair from Ramat Rachel, so there would be no arms for defense when this day came.

I met Venya in a café on the Champs Elysées, to discuss how much I might reveal about the Brayha in the film. We said only a few words about the battle for his home, Ramat Rachel.

The colony changed hands six times, and remained with the Jews.

One day we heard that Paulo, the blonde sabra on our ship, had been killed, fighting in the Negev. A few days later we learned of the death in battle of Shlomo, from Sammy's place, who had helped us get across the Italian border.

Early in June, *The Illegals* was done. The first Palestine truce was on; the battle for world public opinion was at its height when the film opened in New York. Press reactions were all that could be wanted. But as I had tried to warn the sponsors, a documentary film on Jewish misery is not designed as a box-office attraction. Like books and other films about the concentration camps, the film seemed to encounter a resistance, even amongst our own people.

Those who did see the picture were undoubtedly moved. But it had to be recognized that, in general, people did not want to face reality. They were like the woman just outside Dachau who *didn't know* what went on, in there.

I was told of a businessman's reaction. "I have my lawyer make out my twenty-thousand-dollar contribution to the UJA. But I don't want to know any of the stories. I give my money and that's enough."

This reaction, though probably to some degree necessarily self-protective, was a tragic omen to me. I had hoped that the war had brought people a little nearer to reality, had at least made a larger proportion of humanity realize that the truth about what was in mankind had to be assimilated. Now I saw that the flight from reality continued.

Humanity refused to look into its own open wound, refused to recognize its own lust for self-destruction, which it had to understand before it could combat this lust.

Human society still refused to look directly at the fact that it was capable of murdering six million people. In order to pretend to itself that it was not involved in the guilt—for within itself the whole world knew it shared in the guilt—society had to punish the remainder of the Jews. It dragged them through DP camps, it denied them the tiny notch of land it had so long promised them—all this was a way of screaming, "Don't come to us snivelling that we let every third one of you be massacred. It can't be so. It wasn't so. Leave us alone!"

It seemed to me that the murder of six million people had created a psychic chasm, a rift in world human conscience. It was because we could not bridge this rift, because we could not even look down into it, that mankind found itself viewing with a kind of helpless fascination the probability of another war.

Each man, deep in his own heart, was saying, "People couldn't really do anything so bad. Anyway, it's beyond me."

And yet if they would dare look down into the horror they would see that there were people, human beings, even Jews, capable of crawling up and out from the very depths of it. That mankind had the inner resources to surmount its own evil.

The United Nations hearings on Palestine were taking place at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. It seemed a moment when our film could have a useful effect. On the Champs Elysées, I found a theater ready to open *The Illegals* during the hearing. But it seemed impossible for me to get the New York organization to take advantage of any timely opportunity. This one also was lost. Incredibly, they, would not even send a print to show in Europe! I could only go to the Palais and listen to the hearings on Palestine. Sitting there, facing the immense backdrop



of flags of all nations, watching the stage upon which the circle of wise men sat, I was struck by the curious pattern of the war in Palestine, as related to the world. For there had never been a war conducted under the scrutiny of a chorus of representatives of nations.

Each little action was swiftly carried back to the Palais de Chaillot by three messengers: the mediator, and the messenger from each side. Then the three stories were laid before the wise men, and they struggled to make judgement.

It could not be said that there had been no progress. The Russians, who sent Zionists to Siberia, were at the moment strong friends of Israel. The Americans were for, and then against, and then maybe, and now, for. Representatives of the small nations sometimes actually listened to facts and reason, some saying that since they had nothing at stake in the affair they might vote according to their ideas of justice.

And in the corridor, Tuvia Arazi stood talking to a group of friends, and someone brushed by him—Tuvia broke off mid-sentence, to follow the man. The Arab and Tuvia met in an obscure corner and negotiated on a little point toward peace. But it wouldn't have been wise for Jew and Arab to be seen together; the British wouldn't like it.

The British had dropped all pretense of a hands-off policy, and openly fought Israel with every bit of power, every notch of influence at their command; and when all else failed, they resorted to parliamentary manipulation, delays on points of order, committee-rigging, every inch-gaining device.

And as I sat there, I puzzled over the sum of their opposition. For by every logic it had been proven that they had nothing to gain through it; the myth of Arab power was fully exposed; the rumors of oil and mineral wealth in Palestine were without enough background to warrant so much trouble; in the war the Arabs had betrayed them while the Jews had remained faithful. Why, then, had they been consistently against us in Palestine?

Surely the British, as a people, were not emotionally against the Jews at the time of the Balfour Declaration. No. But the British colonials in Palestine—as Dr. Weizmann found when he first came there—were already for the Arabs. And perhaps the root of the whole misunderstanding was in this discrepancy between British feeling at home and British feeling on the scene.

For the English had had a century of fascination in the Middle East, a clear line through Doughty, Lawrence, and other writers and explorers almost mystically absorbed in Arab lore. Saracens, sheikhs, desert riders, people of ceremony. As king-makers, the British had indulged in a kind of masquerade, with the master dressing up his servant in royal robes and pretending to do him obeisance, and finally becoming a little confused, and wondering whether the servant were truly royal.

With the coming of the Jews, the indolent masquerade was interrupted by modern reality. And so they didn't like the Jews. And in the end, as dislike led to strife and terror, the British who had, half-intentionally, half-emotionally, manipulated matters on the scene were able to convince the British at home that their dislike was justified.

All this has been explained in whole books. And yet even Chaim Weizmann could not arrive at a full explanation of the British opposition to Zionism after they had themselves asked to be the implementing power. At the bottom of the equation there was always a gap. It could only be filled by the old, old factor : there were too many of them who didn't like Jews.

Unluckily, in the time of crisis, the foreign minister himself was one of these. And when British soldiers were killed, and a few sick-minded Jews exulted, the British public turned against us.

It was emotion, then, that was the deciding force.

It should not have been a surprising discovery to me that people even in their collective will act emotionally. But here as I sat watching the assembly of nations, where mankind was making its greatest show of reason, here I realized that I had still somehow cherished an illusion that on a high collective level some kind of justice prevailed, or at least a logic of value.

Only in terms of emotion could one understand the British.

When I was a young writer, I accepted a prevalent view that to understand was to forgive. But one could understand, even forgive, and yet condemn, for it was still necessary to fight in a world where men were largely at the animal level.

Point by point, word by word, the battle for Israel went on before the nations.

Many believed that what happened there was futile, and that what happened on the battlefield was all-determining.



And yet it seemed to me that we had come a little way, and that exposition before the assembly of nations did exert a containing influence on the actual fighting, and an influence on the political outcome. The war was perhaps limited, through the existence of the United Nations. Perhaps a beginning had been made toward settlement through reason. And I felt proud that my own people had paid for this through their persistence, and, often, in their self-restraint.

It was heartening in the last days of the assembly to see the British views discredited. Again and again, Mr. Beeler would look around for the faithful show of hands as the British propositions were put, he would turn his head this way and that—but the followers were deserting.

And at last the representative of the United States of America spoke openly, unequivocally before the world : Israel is a nation, he said.

The world had acknowledged our song :

Am Yisroael Chai! The people Israel lives!

* * *

I thought that I could be useful through this exciting period in Israel, as a correspondent. But when I asked my wartime employers, the Overseas News Agency, to send me there, I received a surprising and yet not unfamiliar response. They could not use me in Israel now because of my Jewish name. A gentile by-line, they felt, would receive wider acceptance in the American press.

So there it was again, and most oddly attached, this time, to the very realization of the movement that was supposed to put an end to such reactions in ourselves. Naturally, I was certain that their attitude was a mistaken one, and that newspaper editors would take dispatches from Israel on the basis of their content rather than on Jewish or gentile by-lines. Moreover, the editors who used this agency's service were already familiar with my work and knew something of my background in Palestine. I could not be bitter, for I had encountered this barrier in so many

forms in my life that I confronted it with more than bitterness. As my only means of response, I did what was possible to bring the incident out into the open. However, it was to be more than a year before I could find an employment that would take me to Israel.

All that year I was tormented by the fate of the film, for every creative worker feels a responsibility to his work until it at least has the opportunity of coming before its public. It seemed that every effort to bring *The Illegals* to serve its purpose was blocked, not by ill will, but by a stubborn ineptitude.

Though I incessantly pointed out that the film was not intended as a commercial entertainment, and that it should be made available to schools, organizations, and Jewish communities, my pleading was of no avail. Even commercial possibilities were unexploited. Not a single print of *The Illegals* was sent to Europe for exhibition. For more than a year I carried on a virtual battle to have a copy sent to Israel. Incredible as it may seem, I had to engage in a campaign in the Hebrew press before this was done.

For two summers running, *The Illegals* had almost a certain chance of winning documentary awards in the European film festivals. This is, of course about the only way a documentary film can secure attention. I could not get the film submitted. Yet, in the Hollywood Academy rating, *The Illegals* placed ahead of Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story,* which won a medal at the Venice festival.

With so many opportunities lost, the film still had a permanent historic value, for many people felt with me that it should be a part of the education of every Jew, and that indeed there would be an increase of human understanding if non-Jews, too, were to be shown how a people had to make its way home. It was my unhappy conviction that this last value of *The Illegals* would also be lost if the negative remained in the same control. I wrote to Israel authorities, complaining of the handling of so important a document. Naturally, the secretary was asked about my complaints. I was shown one of his replies, a report that went to the now Ambassador of Israel in the United States. My pleas for having the film exhibited in Europe were answered



with the remark that I was "shrewdly planning by some devious ways to take over ownership and exploitation of the film—"!

Though the same individual later signed a statement that my services had been rendered voluntarily, without pay or the expectation of a financial reward, I was in this report described as "the only person who has gained financially" from the film! I was deeply shocked at the circulation of such statements to persons who might accept them as true. As I was abroad, it was most difficult for me to combat this form of character assassination.

When I returned to New York I demanded that this man appear before an arbitration committee, not only to clear myself, but in the hope of getting the film turned over to the government of Israel.

In the midst of the hearing, there arose the question of the proceeds from the release of the short film, which I had authorized in France. The proceeds were of course waiting for collection by the organization, but no contact with the film distributor had been made; it seemed that it was preferable to suggest, for an entire year, that there was something irregular in my transaction. Even now, before the arbitrators, the secretary said.

"Well, into whose pocket did the money go?"

At that point I struck him.

Through the entire day that followed, I found myself in a state I had never experienced: the physical release of my year-long bitterness had left me with a strange headiness. And I realized that the act had been more than the striking of a fellow who had aroused long anger in me.

What was it then?

Though his behavior had been contrary to my own ethics, it was not, I supposed, much different from the everyday behavior of men of affairs. In his own view he was now even a hero, a public figure who had endured the violence of a "temperamental writer". (When one is engaged in any of the arts, one's every cause can be easily dismissed with the password of the unimaginative, "temperament".) But what was the meaning for myself?

When I struck this fellow—at whom, and at what was I striking?

My association reached directly to the only other incident of physical violence in my life, the time in my childhood when I hit out blindly at the kid who yelled Sheenie. Blindly, because then, too, I didn't understand the real source of my rage.

For an adult who considers himself civilized to strike someone is, I think, far rarer than we imagine, because of our saturation in the movie and fiction world where the sock is the universal solution. People don't go around hitting people, and my blowless life was probably pretty average. What, then, was the extraordinary provocation that linked this blow to my childhood rage?

On the surface the two incidents had no common cause. As a child I had struck at racial insult. As a man I had struck at someone who, like myself, I suppose considered that he was working for our people. I could not therefore be angry over this motive. I was deeply bitter over the handling of the film, feeling that the attack on my character had been used to obscure this more important issue.

Was it only because of personal insult that I had struck out? His remark, as one of the arbiters pointed out, need not have referred to me. "In whose pocket—"

Why had my fury broken out just at this point?

And then I knew.

What I had struck out at in both instances, as a child and as a man, was what I had been fighting all my life. It wasn't only the Jewish problem. It was the embracing problem of human contempt, it was the destructiveness in people against the dignity of life itself. In the child's case this contempt was expressed in the folk-cry—sheenie, wop. In the adult's case it was expressed in oversuspicion of human motive, in simply taking for granted that someone was cheating.

In both cases there was a crippling contempt that kept humanity from expressing its good impulses. Whether the secretary was doubting me or a film distributor didn't matter. The infuriating thing was a condition of suspicion in which he hadn't even troubled to find out from either of us how matters stood. Such distrust, at root, besmirched human relationships.

But even so, why had this encounter so upset me at this time? During the day of after-shock, I saw that what had pained me most in the whole dreary affair of the film, after the loss of



potential usefulness, was the lack of higher concern. It was not the secretary I had struck at, but everybody who had been indifferent. I had appealed again and again to what I felt was authority. Surely at some level, I had felt, there would be a sense of shock at the kind of statements that had been made, without verification, about a volunteer.

What pained me then was that this matter had not been accepted on an ethical plane at any level to which it had been referred. There seemed only the usual apparatus of protection by influential friends.

And then I realized that I had permitted this secretary to become not an individual, but the symbol of my people, for a time. I had for more than a year worked on a project for this people, and as he had been the custodian, the authority over the project, he had represented the people in its relationship to me. And what had I been doing in all these past years if not putting the people itself in the place of the father, the source of being, the almighty. In this disillusioning moment this secretarial person had represented the folk-father, and I had struck out at him like a fretful child. My anger had been toward the individual, but my grievous disappointment was in the folk itself, the callous folk-parent that countenanced falsehood and would not properly reward the son who was trying to be a good Jew.

In the play written in my college days so long ago I had projected this faith in the patriarchal father who instinctively knew that his son would be the personification of good in mankind. This has always been my wish. And now I realized that the last of my "fathers" was imperfect. For I had been providing for myself the folk-father I had provided for the child David in *My Father's House,* I had constructed a *deus ex machina* who was all-our-fathers, who was truth, and I had poetized myself into the illusion that this was particularly the Jewish authority, the parental ethic upon whom our little beings could lean.

And in the last few years I had behaved as if the patriarch was there, a support of last resort, a court of truth.

I had still insisted upon a separateness, a higherness in my people. And I had screamed when they had disappointed me, turning out as imperfect as any other, as ungrateful, as materialistic, as pliant.

What I had flailed against was human imperfection itself, and the utter frustration we feel before the natural flaw. It is the hardest thing to accept, that our father is just an imperfect being who sometimes fails, and sometimes lies, and sometimes acts unfairly. I suppose the analysts consider such acceptance as maturity.

I had to accept that, just as the greater part of my film's value had been pointlessly lost, the vaster part of human energy is lost, frittered away, wasted through lack of imagination and sympathetic understanding. Every valuable idea, every creative work has to pass through the fine sieve of suspicion and fear, and through the needle's eye of mediocrity. Wastefulness is organic in the world, from the myriad sperm that die as against the occasional sperm that fructifies. We go ahead because of the tiny percentage of plus that we manage to extract where there could have been a great plus, and then wars come to take away the laboriously hoarded totals of our little pluses, and the human equation is reduced to less than zero, and what can we do but start making positive values again.

And yet, unhappy as had been the result of the venture, as a personal experience the making of the film had been the richest and most rewarding event in my life. With it, I had come to the end of a stage in my journey toward self-realization. I had at last been back to the beginning in Poland, and like every refugee I had seen for myself that all that connected my people to that place was gone. I had rounded out the task I had adopted for myself from the day I had entered the first concentration camp; I had told all I could find to tell, shown all there was to show. Now, like every Jew, I needed to come to a new understanding of myself in relation to Israel.

* * *

In Marseilles, the Brayha had occupied a few slummy rooms in an alley off the main avenue. Now, just around the corner, on the avenue itself, we found the brass plaque of Israel's Kedem line.



Anyone who has taken a part, however small, in a resistance movement must know the swelling pride of vindication when the movement becomes a government and takes its place in the open. Yet the extent to which this emotion dominates Israelis is not understood in the world today. The Israeli is forever echoing the refrain, we were right, we were right all the time! And the subrefrain is inevitable: we must be right, again, no matter who disagrees with us, for we proved ourselves through all our trials.

This same pride swelled in us as we drove the length of the harbor to where the Israel ship rested openly in port amongst Norwegian, English, and American vessels, the blue-starred flag legitimate among the flags of all other nations.

On board, the same honeymoon wonder continued, not only for us but for all the passengers: none could get over the feeling of: Look, we are doing it! a Jewish boat sailing the sea, a young Hebrew captain, chambermaids who talk Hebrew!—and the whole thing runs so smoothly, just as though it were being done by any ordinary people!

Beyond this, we two had our special, private glee, for we were of the elect, we could contrast this to a voyage on Aliyah Beth. There was an American aboard who had devoted most of his time in the last years to raising money for the Haganah; he went down to the immigrant quarters, where families were crowded eight, ten people to a cabin, with extra hammocks for the single men slung across the open hold. Bob came back shocked at the rough conditions provided for the immigrants, and we assumed superior airs, why this was luxury, he'd never seen an illegal vessel.

All through the voyage there was a family camaraderie. On deck, Israeli sailors vied with the younger passengers in doing pushups and chinning on the spars. At our table was an elderly Englishwoman, returning to Haifa where her husband had remained in business. To make her feel at ease, a young matron of Israel said, "Oh, there are still quite a few English in the country. Some of my best friends are English."

Long afternoon and evening debates took place over the merits of Mapam and Mapai. The vessel carried Israelis returning from missions to Europe and America, businessmen and stu-

dents, a professor for the Hebrew University, American tourists, and even a few Americans going over as chalutzim. These already held themselves aloof from the tourists, with the superiority of the dedicated.

There was an elderly statesman of the Mapai, who had spent some months on a fund-gathering tour in America, and who was rather indignant at the failure of Zionism even now to penetrate to large elements of American Jewry. "Yes, we want the money of the American Jews," he said, "but that isn't enough." And, addressing himself to a small group of tourists, "We want the best of your young people! Why don't you American Jews realize that you are no different from the Jews of Poland and Russia, a few generations ago? Our Zionist movement was carried on at the time when Polish Jewish civilization and Russian Jewish civilization were in flower, when Jews were powerful and influential as Poles and as Russians, when the same arguments about assimilation were carried on there that I heard just now in America. Our fathers were, many of them, Polish and Russian patriots. The Zionist leaders came from good families, from high families too, from amongst the elite, the spiritual and intellectual aristocracy. The sons of these people went off to Palestine to start the early settlements. Yes, of course they represented only a very small proportion of the Jewish population—but why don't we have that from America? We need it, we need American Jews, too, in our mixture in Israel."

The few Americans who had already come and founded a few colonies did not really count, in his regard, and I felt in a way that he was right, for most of them separated themselves from America with a kind of scorn, just as the few American chalutzim on board scorned the tourists; they had taken on the Israeli view of Americans as a crass, overrich people with no spiritual values. They seemed to have an almost smug satisfaction in retailing the incidents of anti-Semitism in America, as though to prove that all American Jews were eventually destined for the gas chamber, except for those who saved themselves by emigrating now to Israel.

There were a few others on the boat who propounded the extreme view that in the end all Jews, from everywhere, would have to come and live in Israel.



There it was, then: the statement of the problem of the Jew outside Israel, which some viewed as a dilemma.

In terms of American Jews alone, did they mean that Israel could, within the foreseeable future, absorb another five million people? Usually such practical questions were avoided in these discussions of "principle". And yet, this principle would mean that all Jews outside Israel should spend their lives in longing and frustration. Obviously this was only an academic question.

But if American Jews did not mean ever to migrate to Israel, what should be their relationship? Should they seek to make stronger ties, or to separate themselves from that land? What about ourselves? Should we see Israel now, imperatively, as our home? Our would it appear to us that we had done our share in the movement, and that we might, like Arthur Koestler, go our way with an "occasional friendly glance behind us"?

As the ship arrived in Haifa and the formalities of disembarkation began, the same spirit of anxious good will was prevalent amongst the passengers—an anxiety that their brethren would do the job well, and that the all-important first impression should be a good one. There were incessant, proud little remarks about the customs men doing their work efficiently and without careless lenience. "Of course, even if they weren't so efficient, we would understand, but after all there will be goyim coming some day, and we must make a good first impression."

Yet there was a little gaucherie in this eagerness to be professional as a nation. We had, for instance, to see a car through customs. Everything was done with proud exactitude—in five sets of offices each clerk performed with patriotic punctilio, checking the motor numbers, the chassis numbers, the serial numbers in quadruplicate. After a day and a half all the forms were complete and we could get the car. Then it was discovered that the keys had not been turned over to the shipping office. The port was ransacked. After taking care of all the formalities, a chief unloader had gone across the harbor with the keys in his pocket.

We felt at home, then. Jews.

When we drove into Haifa there was immediately for us a sense of newness, of oppression lifted. No longer the barbed-

wire lanes, the Arab Legion machinegunners facing you from odd corners. There were no Arabs.

We had known, of course. And we had a prepared attitude on the question : their own people had caused them to evacuate. We drove out of Haifa on the coast road, toward Tel Aviv, and passed the first Arab village, the earth-walled houses roofless, dynamited.

We had known. And this had been a particularly nasty snipers village. Yet though our general justification on the Arab question was prepared in us, this sight gave us a strange guilty sensation of which we were not to rid ourselves, and this guilt must be carried, even if under the heading of the lesser injustice. We were to feel it with a curious jolt a few days later when we drove through Migdal on our way to Ascalon, a beautiful wild seashore near Gaza.

The Arab town of Migdal had been left intact, and it was cleaned up now, and occupied by ex-DP's. From one of them, we asked our way to Ascalon and he said, "You turn at the end of the street, by the ghetto."

"Ghetto?" we repeated.

"There. You'll see."

And at the end of the little street we saw a right turn, just before a barbed-wire enclosure. The " ghetto" was the area where Arabs were confined.

Even to report this is perhaps an exaggeration of emphasis, for in all Israel the Arabs move freely, except in a few such border towns where trouble has been known. But we took the Arab problem head-on, perhaps because with our frame of reference to the past the absence of Arabs struck us more forcibly than it strikes people who were not used to seeing Arabs in the land.

Many Israelis shrug off the question with the justifiable anger of the victor in a war that was instigated by the loser. Nobody chased them out but their own leaders. Other Israelis consider the Arab evacuation as a kind of miracle, a voluntary solution that none had foreseen, for that vexing problem. But for many, like ourselves, there was a high sensitivity on this question. Now that we ourselves were put in the pos'tion of the dominating people, even on so small a scale, would we conduct ourselves well?



In Nazareth, we saw an Arab city to all appearances unchanged, and we felt less tension as we walked through the town than we had felt during the British occupation. There were areas, as on the way from Safed to Acre, where Arab villages remained undisturbed, and in Acre itself the population, half Jewish and half Arab, seemed to get along without hostility.

In the Knesset, in the parliamentary hall that was once a movie theater on the Tel Aviv seashore, we heard an Arab deputy calling for greater aid to the Arab unemployed, and a Jewish speaker responding with statistics to prove that their plight was no worse than that of the refugee Jews still housed in tent-camps in Israel. Certainly, the question was being openly faced.

As population shifts go, the movement of Arabs from Palestine had not been a great one, and it had to be remembered that they still retained, as part of Arab Palestine, areas that were large enough to settle the greatest part of their refugees. Syria and Jordan were underpopulated and indeed could make a good thing for themselves through receiving financial aid to absorb Palestine Arabs. Logically, the situation could be solved with a great deal of justice, perhaps even to the advantage of the uprooted, who might thereby be shaken out of their serfdom.

But emotionally, their departure from their villages created something of a shock, and I found that there were indeed some of the older Palestinians who had not escaped this feeling. Perhaps the most real view I encountered was that of my long-standing friend, Yitzhak Chizik. He was one of those who would not discount our own guilts, in the equation, for his sense of justice was broad and well developed. Yitzhak had run with Arab playmates as a child, and like many sabras of that period he is thought of as "half wild like an Arab". And yet his older sister and his best-loved brother had been massacred by Arabs.

A grown man, Yitzhak had experienced in government service such contact with the Arab population as had been known to few Jews of Palestine, for he had been assigned for long periods as commissioner in totally Arab localities. He had come through years of such service with the respect, often the reverence of the fellaheen.

Here was Yitzhak now in mature manhood, grown a little heavy, a government man with a nice, modest flat in Tel Aviv, two little children, and a wife who was supplementing the

narrow income of an Israel official with a small millinery business.

It was Yitzhak who had been made commander of the largest Arab city, Jaffa, as soon as the place was taken, and he had ruled it sternly, preventing looting as best he could, cleaning the city thoroughly, and controlling its occupation. He had not relished the job. He had witnessed something of vandalism that is a fever in any war, pianos and furnishings hacked up, useful things smashed and destroyed out of sheer violence.

In the fighting, too, there were dark tales of broken restraint, retaliations for Arab mutilations. Perhaps, we agreed, we should be thankful that there remained in our people a residue of baseness to carry us through a war. "But we have to face it," Yitzhak said. "We are no more tolerant than any other people. Oh, intellectually we are tolerant, and individually many of us are tolerant, but as a people we are not yet grown together enough, we don't yet feel strong enough to be tolerant." We spoke of the question of Arab repatriation, and he said, with the regretfulness of a man who cannot consider a question in the pure light in which he would wish to consider it, "I tell you, Meyer, if a large number of Arabs returned, it would be a great strain on our own character—not only the material strain, in the country, but a strain of an ethical kind. I wouldn't want to risk it. At this stage, we aren't ready to deal with a real minority problem."

We talked long about this, and in Yitzhak's attitude there was the regret of realizing limitations in ourselves, the regret we feel as we advance in life and recognize we cannot fulfill all our youthful ideals and that we must select our limited objectives.

And so this had happened in Israel; the Arabs had got out, luckily for the young, mixed, Jewish nation, containing survivors who had so much bitterness to equate, and containing so many strains of its own. I think that in some Jews of Palestine there was an ease of conscience in the sense that they had never really thought of driving the Arabs out, in all their plans for Palestine they had elaborated ways of living with the Arabs. And because the Arabs had themselves taken the radical solution, their deserted villages could rightfully be dynamited; let them not come back.

Jaffa was all Jewish now, and no longer Yitzhak's occupation. In his new job, he was in charge of planning for the Negev, and



responsible directly to the Prime Minister. This strange vast country, vast for Israel, was the mystery of the nation, a wasteland of awesome unexplored mountains, high plateaus, "scenery out of dreams, I never saw anything like it on the earth," a barren and forbidding land, but rumored to contain every sort of riches, oil, copper, perhaps uranium—who knew what might lie in those tormented wastes, the purgatory after Egypt.

We spoke of Yitzhak's family, widespread over Israel. After the number who had been lost in the pioneer years, by good fortune none had been lost in the war. The progeny of the patriarch were numerous, now. "We were planning a big family festival for my oldest sister's fiftieth birthday," my friend said, "and we counted—up to seventy-eight!"

I thought of the progenitor as I had seen him that time in Herzlia, with his gnarled olive limbs, his wiry beard, the old one who had wanted his sons to know only the soil. Seventy-eight descendants. There were still Jews like Abraham, in this land.

The talk with Yitzhak reassured me; not that any solutions to our problems were good in themselves, but that there was a man, raised in this community, who was deeply concerned to do justice, and he was surely not alone.

One did not like to make a balance between those who had gone out and those who had come in, for to any man who loses his home his personal cause is worthier than that of an entire derelict nation. But most of the Arabs, too, had been recent settlers in Palestine, and their evacuation was thrown into a curious light by the fate of another category of settlers, quite small in number—German colonists, originally a Christian group. They had been interned during the war, and their key settlement, Sarona, adjacent to Tel Aviv, had been taken over as a British headquarters and now, fittingly enough, had become the headquarters of the Israel government.

One of their richest little settlements had been near Ness Ziona, an estate of orange and olive groves and well-watered fields of greens. Now I went out to see it, for it had been allotted to Kibbutz Buchenwald.

This was the first of the survivor groups, formed in the concentration camp, and I had known them in Europe and on their arrival in Palestine; when they were living at Afikim they had shown me their group diary which I had translated.

The German settlement they had taken over wore the look of long stability; large, stone-and-cement living quarters, a substantial pumping station, high barns, a mechanized olive press, with drums of olive oil standing in the warehouse.

"You've struck it rich at last," we said. Young Gottlieb, one of those who had written most in the group diary, was showing us around the place. He looked so integrated now, there was no visible trace of the past on him. "Yes, it's good here," he said. "You know, we have forty children, since a few years ago."

As for himself, he took the bus every day to Tel Aviv, where he was studying to become a teacher for the kibbutz, as in a few years the children would be of school age.

They were no longer called Kibbutz Buchenwald, Gottlieb said, but had taken a new name when they had come to this new place. Their name was now Nitzanim, the Hebrew for new buds.

The war had not touched them here, but one of the comrades had been killed in the Negev, and another in Tel Aviv the time when the bus station had been bombed. He had been standing there in line, waiting to come home.

Just outside their gates was a reception camp with its rows of dreary tents. Though few settlements were to be found ready made, there were new places being founded every day, and in time all these tentdwellers would have their places.

I remembered, oddly, the field of German dead I had seen one day in the war. The dead and the dispossessed had to be included in our balance of ideals. Perhaps it was better to know it only as a balance of necessity.

The refugees, even the Buchenwalders, represented generalities to me. It took the fate of one person closely known to make us feel again that there was good in the cruel movement of history.

In a narrow courtyard in the center of Tel Aviv, we attended



Tadik's wedding. Tadik is a cousin of Tereska's, the only one of her father's family who survived in Poland.

I had first met Tadik in Paris more than a year before. He is a tall fellow, looking taller because he is hollowed out everywhere, his cheeks, his chest, his very bones seem hollow. It does not seem a physical hollowness, nor like the starved hollowness of the camp survivors, that soon disappeared. Tadik looks empty out of an inner loneliness. His face is long, quarter-moon, and decidedly assymetrical, but harmoniously so, like a Modigliani face, and his earnest eyes are lustrous, like Modigliani eyes.

Like every survivor, Tadik lived by a miracle. The miracle was a Pole who felt he owed a debt of gratitude to the Szwarc family. Some years before the war, on a business journey to Portugal, the Pole had got himself into trouble and landed in jail in Lisbon. Living in Lisbon was an engineer named Schwartz, one of this typically far-flung Jewish family. Samuel Schwartz heard somehow of the plight of the Pole who was after all, though no Jew, a countryman from Warsaw; he got the man out of jail and loaned him money to reach home.

Once home, the grateful Pole had kept up a relationship with the family, and when the death raids on the Jews began, Tadik had managed to slip out of the ghetto and to find shelter with this friend. He had been placed on a farm, where he worked at some sort of contraband still operated by his benefactor. He survived, and finding himself alone after the war, made his way to the Swarcs in Paris.

There, a year ago, he had attended one of the trade schools established by Jewish welfare organizations. He was learning to be an electrician. Tadik didn't care much about electricity; still, it was a trade. In his youth he had started to study engineering, and there were long debates about the possibilities for his resuming his studies. But he was nearing thirty, and needed to get at grips with life.

We saw him often at family meals. He read a good deal, talked about books and films and theater with lively intelligence, but under all of his self-stimulation there was apparent a slow, devouring loneliness. Once, in a moment of confidence, he told Tereska that he had vowed he would be married by his thirty-first birthday, or—. The "or" was sinister, it was an "or nothing", suicidal.

There were a few girls in his orbit in Paris, also survivors, and Tadik was fond of having himself photographed with his arm around a girl. He carried a whole collection of these photos, and yet, chummy as the couple appeared on each of them, with Tadik grinning self-consciously, there emanated from these snapshots the same loneliness, the same hunger that was about him always. It was as though he were keeping them to prove to himself that he could fit into such a picture, he could look like an ordinary carefree young fellow having a lark with a girl.

Then an opportunity came for Tadik to emigrate to Canada. There was another uncle living there, a chemist who had escaped from Poland just before the war and who had managed to establish himself in Montreal. We debated with Tadik whether he should try to make a life for himself in Canada; we wondered why he didn't consider going to Palestine.

Perhaps he was afraid to use up this alternative, as long as there was somewhere else to go. For if he went to Palestine and failed to adjust, how would he have the courage to try elsewhere? I believe his resistance was based in some fear of this sort. In any case, he set off for Canada.

He wrote very little. We knew it wasn't working well. Only when we met again in Israel did he tell us what it had been like. His uncle and cousins in Canada were good people, and did their best to help him adjust. There was a college boy in the family who tried to interest Tadik in sports. The boy had anglicized his name to Stewart and was proud of the fact that his best friend at the university was a gentile.

Tadik's closest companion was another Jewish boy from Poland, a highly gifted fellow who had managed to get into the university. But in summer, Tadik related, his friend had been required to secure a practical apprenticeship in his profession, and out of thirty-five places to which he had applied, had received only refusals. All of the non-Jewish boys, though lower in their grades, had of course found places. This was Canada for Tadik, the survivor from Poland.

His job had been in a shirt factory. He ran a number-stamping machine. When describing that job, Tadik pumps his arms like the flying mechanical arms of a rotor, and he has the melancholy-comic air of Chaplin in *Modern Times*. To break the monotony of his job, Tradik wrote imaginary letters, and even recited them



aloud, for he was alone at his machine—letters that he never sent, to us, to the few girls he had known in Paris, and to the Pole who had saved him in Warsaw.

So when the war began in Palestine, Tadik at last made the final step. He arrived in Israel in time to endure some nerve-racking days and nights in a cellar in Jaffa, awaiting an Arab counterattack. But presently the truce was solid; Tadik and some of his comrades in arms were talking about forming a kibbutz. There was a shattered and half-abandoned settlement on the Lebanese border, Ramat Naphtali, and they could take over and rebuild the place, they were told. A committee went up and looked at Ramat Naphtali, and they were excited by it, for it had the exhilarating atmosphere of a mountain outpost, and yet there was a plateau of excellent soil to be cultivated. Only one main element was lacking. How could they establish a kibbutz without women?

The fellows in the kibbutz had appointed Tadik as "foreign minister", for they considered that he knew how to get around; after his experience in evading annihilation in Poland, his experience of postwar welfare organizations in Europe, and his travels in Canada, he was a man who could find his way, anywhere. To Tadik were entrusted the preliminary missions to the various government bureaus that had to do with the establishment of a kibbutz, the securing of long-term building loans, and all the complicated negotiations that went with each step of their project. And to Tadik was entrusted the most important mission of all—finding women for their kibbutz. The boys were immigrants like himself; they'd spent their time in the army, few had managed to get girl friends, and even of these girls, none wanted to go up to the remote outpost, to live through the hardships of the first years of a settlement.

And since Tadik had shown them all those snapshots of all those different girls in Paris, augmented by a few from Canada, they were sure he was persuasive with women.

Tadik didn't know any girls in Israel. He couldn't think how to meet any girls in Israel. There was a general shortage of girls, so why should any of them want to go join a kibbutz in upper Galilee, when they could get good husbands in Tel Aviv?

At last he took the direct approach. On the main seaside walk of Tel Aviv, Hayarkon, nested in amongst the tourist hotels and

the soldiers' clubs, was a little cottage for army women called Pinat Chen. Tadik marched in and confronted the girl in charge of the place, a sergeant. In his new, awkward Hebrew he set out his problem. She answered with better Hebrew, but presently they were both talking Polish.

"We need women," Tadik insisted. "How can we set up a colony? It's not only the household jobs that women can do better than men, it's a plain human need, we'll be lonely, and we won't be able to stick it out. After all, what is there more important for a girl to do than to come with us? Besides, we want to start the new-style kibbutz, the family kibbutz, where you live in your own house instead of all together in a barrack. Each family will start with one room, but we've already got the plans so another room can be built on each year, three-room cottages. You have your meals together at home instead of in a common diningroom like a restaurant. And when you have a baby, the baby sleeps in the house with his mother and father, instead of in the baby house. That's the kind of a kibbutz we want. Well, you can't have a family kibbutz without families, can you?"

She agreed this was logical. After some hours the poor girl sighed. "All right, I'll come with you myself." And she promised to round up some others.

Some months went by; the boys were mustered out, they started building their place, some left, some stuck, some girls came and stayed, some left, couples formed, broke up; the building loan came through, and a loan for tractors and other farm machinery and a flock of sheep, and the place looked more like a settlement every day.

Tadik's girl came up to Ramat Naphtali whenever she could get leave, for she was still in the army. However, his thirty-first birthday was approaching, and he remembered his old vow. Tadik went down to Tel Aviv on a "foreign affairs" mission. Zossia was still on duty in Pinat Chen. The back door opened onto the beach and the sea. It was cosy there, after club hours.

Zossia had been alone, like Tadik, ever since Poland. She had found her way through Turkey and all the back roads to Israel. The idea of marriage appeared to her as quite startling, almost frightening. For, curiously, when people are all alone, without family connections, the social act of marriage seems actually outside their world.



And there was also the fear—perhaps the same fear that had made Tadik go first to Canada instead of to Israel, the fear of a final action.

Zossia had arranged quite a few marriages for girls in Pinat Chen. But now that it was for herself, she scarcely knew how to go about it. However, everything came off well.

There was a family dinner with some of Tadik's relatives in Tel Aviv. For the immense Szwarc family had not failed to extend its tendrils to Israel, and among surviving Jews, a remote cousin becomes a close relative. There was indeed an uncle who had lived for a long time in Palestine. Just now his little flat was crowded, for his daughter and her husband and their child were refugees from Jerusalem, where their house had been destroyed; so there were cots all around the walls of the old folks' Tel Aviv flat. But no matter. A long table was set, and in spite of austerity there was a festive meal, and a half-dozen remote cousins had been found and assembled, and so Zossia was welcomed by Tadik's family.

We all met again at the wedding in the courtyard just off Rothschild Boulevard. And there was an immense new Chrysler in the street, waiting to carry off the married couple. The Chrysler, too, was a story, for it was a taxi—owned by a cousin. This cousin, from another side of Tadik's family, had found Tadik in a curious way. The taxidriver had heard that a young man named Tadik Szwarc had been encountered somewhere in the army, and he had wondered whether this might be a survivor of the family in Poland. So he had put an ad in a newspaper, asking for Tadik to get in touch with him. Tadik had not seen the ad. No one in the family had seen the ad. But in the uncle's flat in Tel Aviv was a shared bathroom. One of the neighbors had a terrible case of dysentery. He had to get up in the middle of the night and sit for hours in the bathroom. He read every scrap of paper lying there. And he saw the ad.

So the wedding came off in style, with the cousin's Chrysler in attendance. We all crowded into the little courtyard, where there was an enclosure with a bench on which two or three brides were waiting. One was completely done in white, like a bride in a store window. But Zossia came along in a French frock, with a little white veil. Tadik was in a gray suit, with a borrowed felt hat. The uncle had remembered to bring skullcaps for the rest

of us who didn't have hats. We mounted the little wooden platform where the permanent Tel Aviv wedding canopy was fixed. The courtyard buzzed with paunchy little men, each of whom had a receipt book for some sort of charity. Their begging—not even picturesque—was an irritating part of the ceremony which would otherwise have been quite entirely heartwarming, for it was simple and short without losing the feeling of tradition, and something of mystery.

Tadik stood erect under the canopy, while his aunt and another matron led Zossia twice around him, and the passages were recited, and they sipped the wine from the goblet, and Tadik put the ring on Zossia's finger and stomped his foot on a glass wrapped in a bit of newspaper, smashing it properly, while his little sabra nephew whispered, "Is it his glass, or the city's?"

At the Central Café, there were three long tables lined with cakes and drinks. It was a real wedding feast with family and friends. Tadik and Zossia kept circulating amongst the tables, talking with their folks, with their army comrades, and they were beaming. Some of the young people started singing horas.

For the first time, there was no trace of melancholy on Tadik's face.

The little nephew wondered where Tadik got the money for such a feast, since army pay was so small. And there was an explanation. Years before, Tadik's father had sent a hundred pounds to be deposited in a bank in Palestine, just so, because a Jew should have something in Eretz Israel. And so, now, the money had paid for his son's wedding.

Certainly, it was a quite ordinary scene, and it made an ordinary story. Two lost individuals are united and they are no longer lonesome. Jews find themselves at home in Israel. But these were people we knew, and their marriage seemed to us extraordinary, even rather miraculous.

We went up to see Tadik, at Ramat Naphtali. The zigzag road hung on the edge of the sheer mountainside, and at the top was a police fort dominating the entire valley of the Huleh. The British, on leaving, had turned the fort over to Arabs, and the first attack upon it had failed, with many dead. Looking upon the



fort, massive and unapproachable, we could not imagine how it had ever been taken, and yet the second assault had succeeded.

A few miles from the fort, along the cliff, was the Jewish strongpoint that had stood against it. This was Ramat Naphtali, the old, a settlement built as one square block of stone, solid-walled, dominated by a small tower. Shellholes could be seen in the structure, but it had withstood siege until only nine defenders remained alive in the place. Arab tanks had driven into the yard, but the story went that as an officer climbed out of the first tank a girl amongst the remaining garrison drew careful aim and shot him down. When their officer fell, the invaders turned tail.

Approaching, we saw a stone-fenced graveyard, with two neat rows of the dead of Ramat Naphtali, and by it was the site of the new settlement with rows of tents, and outlines of buildings marked on the ground, and a number of cottages already standing, and a tin-roofed shelter for farm implements, with a bright new harvester combine optimistically dominating all.

A cement mixer was churning, and a bucket chain was at work pouring the walls of a cattlebarn. Out of that gang came Tadik, beaming, a master showing us around his domain. He would not stop marvelling at the beauty of the site, this high flat mountain-top overlooking the rich valley with its thriving settlements, Ayeled Hashachar, Cfar Blum, all the way up to the sources of the Jordan, and to Dan. Below us glittered Lake Huleh, and the rows of laboriously constructed fish-breeding ponds. We could well see, as Tadik pointed out, why the Arabs had tried so hard to take this place, for a few guns here could command the entire valley. But it was an exhilarating site, free, open, hard, a place for strong life. The colony was half new, half composed of members of the old settlement.

Tadik tramped with us to point out the installations. There was already a children's house, and these tots, born in the old settlement, had been evacuated one night by a special squad that had climbed up the mountainside. They had brought up water for beleaguered Ramat Naphtali, each man carrying sixty pounds, and loth to drink a drop of it during the long brutal climb. And they had carried the children out on their backs, on the way down. These same children were home again, napping on their cots.

Tadik showed us the sheep pens and the troughs for dipping,

for sheep raising would be a major undertaking in these hills; there was already a flock of five hundred—we could make them out, there, on an opposite slope. And there was the plateau of fertile land, black soil all under plow, and beyond, that distant village we could see was already in Lebanon.

The rows of cottages would stand just here, and around each would be a small private garden. "Oh, in a few years, you'll see—" he waved his arm, and we could see the white houses, the trees, the kids, just as I had seen it come to pass in Yagur, in Cfar Blum, in Ain Hashofet.

He had a tent all to himself already, and Zossia would be released in a few months from the army and come to join him here.

"It will be wonderful for them," we said as we left Ramat Naphtali, "they've really found their place."

"They"—and what about ourselves? We remembered the argument on the boat, and indeed it was an argument I had carried on with myself, most of my adult life. Was it imperative that a Jew now live in this land?

Many years ago, on one of my returns from Palestine to Chicago, a girl who had romantic ideals for me had said, with something of disappointment, "But I thought you would stay there, and carry out your idea of founding an American colony." As to founding a colony, Ed Robbin and I had indeed thought of it at that time, but I had always feared to assume the responsibility for telling others what to do with their lives. There are people who like to guess which way history will turn, and to run ahead and beckon. My own work has seemed to be to try to determine as best I could what is true, and to offer this for what it is worth to people in their own guidance.

Others had, in time, felt it was their task to build settlements of American Jews in Israel, and it was quite natural that I would speculate, on visiting them, how things would have been with myself if I had stayed and done this with my life. In Afikim there was an American nucleus I had known for many years, and I walked with Tsvi Goodman and his wife and little son through the great new plywood factory they were building, for their settlement derived more than half of its income from its industrial



side, and I walked with them through a whole new section of residences for the older settlers, each to have a shower and toilet in his own little apartment at last, and Tsvi and his wife were content with their lives, and told how the kibbutz had its first grandchild this year, and how all of the children grown in the place had remained to become members of the settlement.

In Ain Hashofet they remembered me from the time in the rainy season of 1937, when they had set up their colony, and we huddled over a table and studied the plans for the settlement they hoped to build. It was all built now, and around them on neighboring hills were newer settlements that Ain Hashofet had mothered, and in the valley from which Fawzi El Kawakji's bands had harassed them in the first year of their settlement Fawzi had come again, during the war, and he had been defeated and routed completely, for many of the Haganah's officers had trained on this very terrain. They were an old, established colony now, mingled with European-born, their American origin remote and incidental. We talked with Abraham Fein; it was Sabbath, and his little twin daughters with their whole class were going off on a hike; kids of five, they had decked themselves out with rucksacks and staffs, and had even twisted ropes around their middles in the semblance of mountain climbers, and off they marched to clamber over the low hills where the Arabs had been defeated. Abraham Fein had only recently returned from a three-year mission to America; "I was lonesome all the time," he said, "away from home."

I could not help feeling here something of the same attitude that most Israeli's have for American Jews, something of disdain, even moral condescension toward the rich ones across the sea who hold bridge-party benefits for Israel. It was, of course, partly the superiority feeling of every idealist, every believer, toward those who have not completely accepted his cause. But it disturbed me. Americans were "they". I wondered if Jews could say "we" any more, for America and for Israel. I wondered whether it was necessary, in changing, to reject a civilization as unworthy.

I went to talk to some others who had come from America; in Cfar Blum there was Yehuda Stringler, son of a building contractor of Minnesota. I had met Yehuda years before, gone with him once on a ceremonial visit to his neighboring Arab sheikh,

when Palestine was tense with hostility, and another time I had met him in New York, when he had come on a mission to raise a loan for his kibbutz, and we had gone together to the home of some rich Zionists, on a visit almost as ceremonial as that to the sheikh, for the Zionists had never before met a real settler from Palestine.

As always, Cfar Blum was head over heels in debt but they were building, building, at a mad pace, now they were five hundred souls and they simply had to install a sewage system, and Yehuda explained how lucky they were to have a first-class engineer, recently come over from South Africa. His head was full of immediate building problems, I suppose not so different from those in the head of his father, a builder in Minnesota.

We sat with Yehuda and Eliza in their room, and their little girl was playing with a doll that had just been sent from the States. "Private property," Eliza joked. Oh yes, the children were now permitted to have their individual toys, which they kept in their parents' room instead of in the children's house.

We talked of the communal way of life, and Yehuda was worried about the problem of their chief dairyman who had walked out on his job and taken to ditch-digging for the sewage system. "Why? Because he couldn't do a first-class job any more with the conditions we have now. You know, first-class feed is hard to get, you have to adapt yourself, and we haven't got the best-trained people to help him, but no, he says, rather than work halfway, he doesn't want to work with cattle at all. Well, that's a problem—how are you going to make a man take the job you assign to him? All we have is moral persuasion." We talked of such day-by-day things. Eliza was not too crazy about raising kids in the children's house, one kid waking would wake all the others, and of course if one kid had a disease it went through the whole house. Yehuda and Eliza said there was a lot to the new system of partnership kibbutzim, with families living to themselves.

It was talk that could go on in any settlement in Israel, talk about the economic difficulties in the land, the need for exports, jokes about Ben Gurion. When we spoke of America, I found again a kind of tolerant scorn for the Jews there. Indeed, they had a typical story about an American tourist who had come to Cfar Blum. Cfar Blum, like most kibbutzim, had a little industry :



here, spring-clasp clothespins were made. The tourist was taken into the factory, where she saw several girls sitting assembling the pins. She talked to one of the girls, who was from Newark.

"And tell me," said the tourist lady, "did you work in a clothespin factory in Newark, too?"

Undoubtedly, American Jews were that way, particularly the ones who could afford to take trips to Israel; they were either overpatronizing or overhumble. And the settlers had been through years of self-elected hardship, and they had been through a war. The gap in experience, the gap in viewpoint was widening.

I went for a shower with Yehuda, and he talked of the war. Cfar Blum itself had been lucky; even the Arab planes had passed over them, to dump their bombs on the border settlements, Dan, and Cfar Szold—from the yard, here, they'd watched the flashes, helpless.

Yehuda had gone with a group to the fighting at Mishmar Hayarden, where the Arabs had tried to cut off the whole valley, at its neck. With two comrades, Yehuda had held a sandbag strongpoint on the edge of the colony. "One of us had an old French rifle, and I had a rifle, and the other fellow had a sabra tommygun, sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't."

Arab armor had overrun Mishmar Hayarden. A bullet, by the malchance of war, had come directly through the small firing hole into their post, and killed the man next to Yehuda.

Seeing that the settlement was lost, Yehuda and his remaining comrade had attempted to escape, crawling out into high grass. The grass was raked by machinegun fire, but they lay, luckily untouched. They lay there for six hours, hearing Arabs all around them. Yehuda's companion grew hopeless; one grenade remained to him, and he declared he would use it to blow himself up, for he wouldn't be taken by the Arabs and mutilated.

Yehuda persuaded him to wait. At night they began to crawl, inching their way among groups of Arabs who lay camped all around them. Somehow they got up on a hillside, but then they were spotted; a bullet grazed Yehuda's nose. "I can't say it was no skin off my nose—" he could joke about it now— "because it just took the skin off. We tumbled down that hill. I don't know how the hell we got out of there."

I was thinking, "Could I have done it?" and I suppose my thought reflected the self-consciousness of every Jew outside of

Israel. Yehuda was a friend of mine, and I thought of him as a really good man, a practical idealist who had done what he felt to be his task in the world, who in no way considered himself a hero or even a remarkable person. From him, I could feel no accusation whatever toward the outside world, toward what people should or should not have done.

But I wondered whether my own fleeting self-accusation was not a clue to the divergence that could develop between the two great remaining communities of Jews, between Israel and America. The Israeli was the hero of our times, the pioneer, the fighter against odds, the victor; already there were many legends of David-like deeds in the war against the Arabs, and, like all common men, we would resent as well as adulate the hero.

I found myself thinking more and more of this separation between the two Jewish communities; of the "they" and the "we", though for myself, the distinction was difficult to make —I spoke of myself in relation to American Jews as "we", and could not help using "we" for myself and Israel, but with some uncertainty as to whether I had a right to do so, not being an Israel citizen. Clearly, I felt there was a "we" that meant we Jews.

But to the Israeli, Americans were crass materialists, and those who came to Israel were ostentatious, condescending, or else overenthusiastic weepers. They stayed at the best hotels on Tel Aviv's seashore, and they complained if their room had no private bath. They whisked through the settlements, or they came as "hardheaded", well-intentioned businessmen who wanted to invest in a sure thing, discovered that labor costs were no less than in the United States, and went away complaining that they could not put their money into what might become a socialist state.

Yet both groups had a burden in common, the burden of the vast number of Jewish refugees, the burden of the future of the people. The Israelis felt they were carrying by far the heaviest part of it, contributing not only money out of proportion to their means in comparison to the Americans, but sharing their food, clothing, their homes with the refugees, living in strict austerity on short rations, while the Americans had only to give their excess dollars. And indeed they thought of the American



contribution as mandatory, and this Israeli feeling had by now projected itself to the American Jewish community, who realized that their heroic brethren held them somewhat in scorn.

On the American side there was the conviction that at considerable sacrifice American Jews were carrying the main financial burden in Jewry's crisis, and that the Israelis might be a little more appreciative of American generosity. But it could not be denied that there was in their generosity something of the attitude one has toward a poor relative, however brave the fellow may be. And there was something worse. Coupled with their pride in Jewish achievement in Israel was a fear for their own security. Perhaps the goyim now really had a right to say, "Why don't you go live in your own country!"

And so, while many longed to identify themselves emotionally with Jewry in Israel, they hastened to adopt the "Irish" attitude: great fellows there in the old country, brave fellows, we like to help them out all we can, but of course we're way away from all their kind of life.

And they accepted those tales of Israel that were superhuman, remote, rather than real; they needed the Israelis to be a far, legendary people rather than brethren.

The tales of war prevalent abroad emphasized these legendary qualities, rather than reality. It was scarcely understood that a chain of outpost settlements, placed with strategic wisdom, built up throughout the years, had held fast, literally from Dan to Beersheba. In nearly every one, the pattern had been the same: the mothers and children evacuated, and the men of the colony pledged to stand to the last. In Ein Gev, in Beit Eshel adjacent to Beersheba, where they had been supplied by air, they had not been taken because well-entrenched, courageous fighters are extremely costly to root out. Indeed, to ascribe their victory to a kind of combination of clever tricks and miracles was to detract from the real bravery of their stand, and at the same time to make them other than human, and again remote.

Thus, the war had given birth to tales of the David-and-his-sling variety, emphasized and elaborated abroad. In Dagania, facing Syria, for instance, it was said that a clever deception had discouraged an Arab attack. This was the story I had heard in Paris of the cars sent at night to drive repeatedly down the hill with their lights ablaze, to give the impression of great

reinforcements pouring into the place. It was true that someone had thought of the idea about the car lights, a boy of Dagania told us as we stood in front of a burned-out Arab tank that had been stopped at the very edge of the settlement yard. And a few cars had tried the trick, he said, but Arab artillery had spotted them, so they had put out their lights and scuttled home. The Arabs had been stopped by no tricks. They had been stopped at these trenches, by close fighting.

And there was the tale of the Egyptian border settlement, Nirim, whose men had dressed as Arabs and spread the atom-bomb story in the enemy camp, until the Arabs had folded their tents and gone away.

We went to find Nirim, for we were anxious over the fate of the youngsters we had known there, in making *My Father's House.*

The road to the kibbutz was cut off by the Arab-held section at Gaza, and the Nirim area could be approached only by a back way, a track across the sandy wastes.

The group was no longer at its original site, but had moved some miles inland. Not that they had retreated. After the truce, an army unit had at last taken over the shattered outpost. And the kibbutz had moved to better land.

We forded a stream at the bottom of a broken-edged gorge. There were only trucktracks to follow, but at last we saw the beginnings of a settlement in construction on a hilltop. A few cabins were standing, and there was the framework of a dining-hall—exactly as we had seen Nirim on the day of the settlement-raising, three years before. They were beginning anew, and ten of the kibbutz were dead. The mukhtar, who had sat with us one night having ceremonial coffee with their Arab neighbors, had been killed by a direct shell hit on his trench.

Many of this group were sabras from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. We walked over the new site with one of the boys of the place, and we told him the legend about the Arabs folding their tents.

"So they tell stories of us," he said, smiling a melancholy smile.

"Oh yes. Your settlement is famous."

"Yes? We didn't know this. Out here, we get very little news."

As for dressing as Arabs, it was true that when the Egyptians



had approached, a few boys had put on Arab clothes and tried to slip out, during the night, with the idea of blowing up the tanks in the Arab camp. But the boys had been spotted and fired upon; they had barely managed to get back to Nirim's trenches without carrying out their mission.

From this, the legend had grown, and I wondered if it was like to olden times, that reality was harder to accept than legend; perhaps David had really grappled with the giant, but who would believe that a stripling could kill Goliath in direct battle? And therefore the tale of the slingshot had to be invented.

"Then they attacked you, with their armor and all. How did you manage?"

"We fired with everything we had. There were about three hundred of them. Our gasoline bottles didn't work and we had no Piat gun. But we fired on their foot soldiers that were coming with the tanks, and a lot of them fell, and after a while the tanks withdrew. We found thirty or so dead on the field, so I suppose that was why they withdrew, they saw too many around them being killed. You know, it is something we have known about the Arabs, in our troubles with them, for years; they can't stand to see casualties, once a few of them are hit, the rest run away."

There had been no other massed frontal attack; they had lived in their shelters, harassed by air raids, but provisioned also by air.

One of the girls came up to join us. She was so young, a girl always half laughing; she was shaking out bedding, preparatory to moving into a newly completed cabin. "How do you like this site?" she asked. "It's spacious here, from the hill. And the soil is better, not so sandy. This will be our permanent home."

No ruse had worked, and the earth had not opened to swallow the enemy. The youngsters, born of this land, had fought the war, taking it head-on, and we needed to know them for what they were. I recalled an incident related by Ginger, the English lad who had worked in the Brayha and helped us with our film in Vienna; he'd come to Israel and taken part with the Palmach in the fighting, and been wounded. "I was in a jeep, and we saw a tank across a field," he'd told us. "We could have gone around, but no, the sabras drove straight across the field at the tank,

opening up with everything they had in the jeep. Yes, we got the tank. But we might have got it without so many casualties. I saw them storm one of those police forts, eleven Lechi boys with hand grenades running across an open field at the fort, tossing grenades at the windows, at the apertures. Nine of them got killed, but two of them got to the gate and blew it down."

For they were the Habirim of old. Through their childhood they had know the time would come when they would fight for this land, and it came at the close of that childhood.

One of the sabras from Nirim rode back with us, and we passed Faluja, where the Egyptians had been defeated and pocketed in the last action of the war.

"There is Gath," he remarked, "where David beat the Philistines."

And indeed, the kibbutz of Gath, on the ancient site, was directly opposite Faluja, and the stream across which the Israelites and the Philistines had defied each other was there between the Jewish settlement and the remains of the Arab town. Many had compared the stand of Israel against the multiple invasion by Arab nations to David's battle against Goliath, but to the sabra it was more than a comparison, it was reality, for the Arab defeat had been accomplished on the identical ancient site.

And in reality, it came to me, the explanation for the distance that was growing between the Jew of Israel and the Jew outside Israel, between "them" and "us", was the simple fact that the outsider did not know this Jew, who was our past made present.

Despite all that had been written and told of the Yishuv in the past thirty years, few outside Palestine realized that the children brought up in the land had the Bible as their geography and their sociology, rather than as a religious work; every place name of Biblical times was familiar to them as a hiking ground during their scout years, they were David's men, they were the last-ditch fighters of Masada, they were Gideon's men and they were Joshua's men, and this war was a continuation of all the wars in this land; they were falling at night upon the Hittites and the Jebuzites, the Edomites and the Philistines, the Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqi, and invaders from across the Jordan. To them the Jews of America and other lands were merely the Jews who had not returned after the captivity of Babylon.



The outside Jew had sensed that the Israeli was the continuation of the Jew of Biblical times, and for this reason, perhaps, had so enveloped him in legend, and consigned him to remoteness. But conversely, the human, living Jew of Israel could serve to humanize all of our past, to make us feel at home with our ancestors. Through him they became less legendary, and people like ourselves.

On simplest terms, we needed to know each other, just as we needed to make our plain selves known to the outside world. In this was my task. It was the work I had always been doing; it was the work I had still to do. My actual physical place of residence was of lesser importance, it would depend on the requirements and the opportunities of this work. In my own field, it was appalling what small means there were for the two remaining Jewish populations to come to know each other. While every fund-raising organization maintained its propaganda services and its publications, there was not a single general organ between the one Jewish group and the other; the average Israeli had only the most distorted idea of American Jewish life, and the American Jew had only the propaganda view of Israel. Of the bubbling life in the new-old country, of the rapidly growing Hebrew literature, of the new forms of civilization, the festivals transforming our religious holy days, of the economic orientation of a generation bred in the presence of both capitalistic and socialist institutions, little was being transmitted to America.

"They", in the minds of American Jews, might finally come to mean a strange, legendary people, proud and poor, a socialistic, Hebrew-talking, half-Arab kind of Jew mixed up out of European DP's and Yemenites and Moroccans, to whom one gave a few dollars every year—money that anyway came off the income tax.

And "they", in the minds of the Israeli Jews, would be the wastefully wealthy, oversentimental and patronizing American Jew with the cigar in his mouth, ignorant of tradition and impervious to moral value.

And the non-Jewish world could not help but absorb something of both these views.

Only reality could close the gap, the reality of the average

American Jew with the problems and difficulties and partial compensations of all America, searching for ideals and for a union with the traditional past, like any other human, trying to live decently, compromising, trying. And the reality of the Israeli, faced with the same problems of world insecurity, compensated for his more difficult economic position by a closer contact with tradition, searching for the place of the individual in society, compromising, trying.

The forces of necessity would drive the two groups together, just as psychological factors tended now to drive them apart, and surely there would be many seeing the same needs that I had seen, for the Jews were still one people. They needed, just now, perhaps to be reminded of this truth. Indeed, my own coming and going between the two groups was not so much a sign of conflict, split in myself, as of their organic oneness.

Two places I had still to see again, and each, in its way, was to contribute further to my understanding between legend and reality.

Twenty years ago, in the closing portion of Yehuda, I had written a rhapsodic passage, putting the words in the mouth of a nebach of the commune, a hapless little fellow who always had to do every job twice, because tools broke in his hands, and mules would never obey him. But now, riding home from the harvest in the fields, Fishkin rhapsodized to an American visitor. "But what do you think, we will always be like this, paupers and beggars? Here, too, we will make everything modern, up to the minute, we want to work with great machines, to do everything with the power of engines! In many ways we are fools, yes; there you see Pinsker ploughing a field with mules against a tractor; and in the kitchen we have a stove that eats up ten pounds worth of wood a month, when for fifty pounds we could buy a stove that would do both the cooking and baking with half that much fuel, well, we haven't the fifty pounds to lay out, but that will come, everything will come; see, we have many things to work for. Stay here, Mr. Paley, be our power from America! You will see what will be done here on this plain! Look, right on this line across our lands the cables of Ruttenberg's electric power will be carried.... We will have electric lights in our cabins, our yard will be bright as an American street, an electric motor will pump our water, and we will have all the water we want, we will be able to plant



bananas, bananas yield a profit of twenty pounds per dunam, with the profit we will enlarge our plantation; next year, too, the vines you see on the hill will begin to yield grapes, we will sell the grapes and the year after that the second vineyard will give fruit and we will make wine for ourselves, we will drink wine in the commune, Mr. Paley! Look, here by the Kishon the government has promised to help us make improvements so that malaria will disappear from this district, we will dig a narrow ditch for the Kishon, and we will pour cement walls along the ditch, the Kishon will run in banks of concrete, yes, this is already planned, not many years now and that work will begin! Look how our forest grows, Mr. Paley! When we came here there wasn't a tree to be seen! Now our bees feed on the eucalyptus and give honey, every year we'll have more wood, more honey, too, as our bees increase! Now you see us living in shacks, yes, but when we came here we lived in tents. We have already built a house of concrete for the children; stay this winter, Mr. Paley, and you will work with us putting the roof on our cattlebarn, do you see the rows of cattle that are waiting to go into it! We started with twelve cows, now we have fifty, next year we will have seventy! Then we'll begin to keep milk for ourselves to drink!... Then another henhouse has to be built, the newest kind, with one side all of glass, after that we'll build a grain storehouse, and then we will put up concrete houses for ourselves to live in! We will have a whole street of little houses, and a great messhall, and there will even be a stage in the messhall, that's all in the plans! We will have a radio, too, we will listen to the music from America, Mr. Paley, when Ruttenberg comes along with his electric power!... Here on this side of our land is a wasted Arab field of a thousand dunams, the National Fund has promised to buy it for us.... Last time Plotnick went to Jerusalem they said they were already making the contract. You see how everything spreads and increases with us, Mr. Paley, here we are going over this little wooden bridge over the Kishon, the chassidim built this bridge, and we laugh about it because planks are always breaking out of it, the paper bridge, we call it, because you know there is a story that Messiah will come riding on his white horse over a bridge of paper; but never mind, we will not wait for the Messiah! Some day we together with the chassidim will build a great road here, and we will throw a bridge from one high bank to another, so

that the horses will not have to toil up this hill with loads of wheat. Horses! We will do all our hauling with trucks!

"Look, Mr Paley, we have new babies in the children's house, and we have five new calves in the cowbarn; our flock of geese has doubled in the yard; true, we are still in debt, we have terrible debts, and do you know what interest we have to pay on the money we borrow, ten and twelve percent! Never mind! See the wheat we had this year! A thousand pounds we got for the wheat crop alone! That isn't all, Mr Paley. We'll work like men, here, all the new ways of working we'll find, we'll use our heads as well as our arms! Now we are going to buy a second tractor, and so we will work with two tractors in our fields.... With scientific fertilizers we will change our soil so that it will be suitable for richly bearing fruit trees. Do you see that hill of manure that the Arabs left! Year by year we will lower it, spreading it over our lands. In the end it will disappear altogether! So, too, the Arabs will disappear from this plain. Even now, almost all the land you can see is Jewish land; this whole plain will belong to Jews! What do you think, Mr. Paley; we will go forward in Eretz Yisroael! we will enlarge ourselves in every direction!"

And as Fishkin talked, queer feelings lifted in the throat of Mr. Paley, for this was sloppy Fishkin, the little peanut whose feet were always sloshing in mud, whose pants always sagged from his hips, whose shirt was blotted with patches, and whose girl went off with Chayim-Trask! What wild imaginings, what foolish dreams! and yet how filled with vigor, how filled with song!

The towers from Ruttenberg's cables will march across our field charging our land with power, driving the water through our soil, bursting the crops from under, the Kishon will flow in banks of concrete, the dry cracks in the earth will grow together, tractors will ride over the stickler weeds, the sunburst flowers will give place to waving grain, our bees will make honey, our cows will give milk, the Kishon will flow in banks of concrete, and eucalyptus will stand high all along her length; those who are afflicted will become strong, there will be no more fever among us; the Kishon will draw in from her marshes and seep away from her muddy places, the Kishon will flow in banks of concrete—!



And so we passed again by Wallad el Sheikh on the way to Yagur. There were Jews now living in the village. History was harsh, it did not permit us to attain any ideal without the concomitant evil, and I remembered from my first readings of the Bible how there had always been violence, slaughter in our search for a home in this land. I could not grapple with it; it was a guilt, surely, a memorial guilt, and, like some blood sacrifice, renewed. Every people had such guilts in their history; we had to live with it. And perhaps it was not a great sin to have caused these Arabs to remove to another Arab land, fifty miles away.

To the left of the road, where the cornfields had been, there were now rich, well-watered orange groves, and to the right, in place of the barren yard, was a paradise of verdure. Amidst the shading lanes of pepper trees and eucalyptus and cedar, by gardened lawns with goldfish pools, stood the two-story concrete houses, row after row, reaching halfway up Mount Carmel, for the very side of the mountain was being covered now by the settlement, housing fifteen hundred souls.

A half-bald chavar with a long, humorous face paused, recognizing me. It was Fishkin, of old, and he walked with us, showing us the wonders of Yagur. The cattle stood in their modern barns, row on row, and beyond them were the glass-walled chicken runs, not two, not three, but dozens, with the white fowl now as thick as snowflakes in their pens. Combines, seeders, tractors stood in the machinery shed; we walked again through the immense dininghall with its stage and its film screen, and through the model kitchen with everything mechanized even to the electric bread slicer, we walked across the commune's huge tinware factory, through its weaving plant, and we walked through the fields where the earth was pliant and young again.

There had been no fighting here. But several of Yagur's firstborn had fallen in the Negev and other battlefields, and some of the older men, also. "You remember Yitzhak Loberman?" I remembered him, tall, with straight, black hair, and a fierce, narrow face. "He was killed on the Jerusalem road."

We saw Yehuda's sons, two fullgrown boys coming together from the fields. Yehuda spent most of his time now teaching music to children of the commune.

All, all of Fishkin's rhapsody had come to be. There was no more malaria on the plain, the swamps were dried. We passed over a modern bridge, and, glancing down, I saw the Kishon flowing, tamed, in banks of concrete.

Sometimes I wondered if we drew too much pride from the building, building in Israel. Indeed, in twenty years I had seen much built, but one might reason that in such a span of time a man in normal conditions anywhere should achieve a house and farm or workshop. Swamps in other lands had been drained, and greater cities than Tel Aviv had sprung up during these two decades. While Yagur had risen to the level of a room each for the settlers, individual Jews in other lands could show that they had built entire blocks of apartments, great factories.

In Chicago, in a not much greater space of time, I had seen whole neighborhoods built by Jews, as by immigrants from other lands, and Russia had built, and South America had built, all people were builders. Achievement had been somewhat more remarkable in this land because our settlers had started from zero, and against the contrast of Arab indolence; still, they had had continuous outside help. But again it would be better, I thought, not to present these as superhuman achievements, but to be proud of the civilization that had been built together with the farms, the language revived, the university built, the newspapers, theaters, multiform activities that made a culture, a people; as against these, the Jews of Chicago and Manhattan and Paris had little to show that was purposeful. We in America had our great institutions to preserve our learning and traditions, synagogues, temples, community centers, rabbinical schools, but we had made no thrust forward; the thrust had to come from Yagur.

The road to Jerusalem was smoothly surfaced now, the same "Burma road" built under Arab shell fire, the same road that the little armored convoys had taken during the "unofficial" war, the same road on which Yitzhak Loberman of Yagur had been killed, and many others.

The Arab village was vacant, where once the children had mimicked machineguns at us; we passed on the other side of the



woods where the Haganah man in Arab garb had waved us on with his sabra tommygun.

As we halted for one-way traffic where the road was under repair, an impatient driver ahead of us yelled to a road worker. "This is the third time you've done this piece over."

"Yes, and we'll do it a fourth and a fifth time too if need be," the worker retorted. "If you don't understand why it wasn't built to your taste in the first place, go up on the hill there and count the graves that paid for your road."

"I drove the convoy trip fifty-seven times under fire," the driver snapped back. "Don't tell me anything."

All were heroes.

So we came again to Jerusalem. The unfailing sense of elation rose in us as the city appeared on the hill before us, and Tereska said her forebears must surely have lived in Jerusalem, and not in any other part of the land, for it was only here, and invariably here, that the queer, high sense of homecoming made itself felt.

Some had said Jerusalem suffered little in the war; indeed, the city appeared intact. Even the hole from the great bombing in Ben Yehuda Street was almost built over, and the Jewish Agency's bombed wing was rebuilt and a new building was being added; all over Israel people worried for Jerusalem, saying on what would the city live, a city all by itself on a hilltop; yet the eternal mystery of its economy continued, the streets, the shops were lively, and soon it would be the government city again.

The marks of war were there, if one went to look for them; the gash of contact ran the entire length of the city, from Ramat Rachel on the eastern outskirts, along the wall of the old city, and into the western edge in the Bokharian quarter.

In Ramat Rachel, no structure remained except the thick-walled chedar ochel, where we had once seen the British conduct their search for arms. Built as a fort, the place had well served its purpose; shell battered and bullet pocked, barren, with only the legless remains of a grand piano laid across an old kitchen table, it stood like a classic setting for a war scene.

The children's rooms, where we had filmed, were littered with battle debris, and across the yard the baby house stood only as a roofless fragment. The living quarters were razed.

In the yard were three rows of barricades, one of concrete, one of wood, and the last of sandbagged trenches. There from the trenches the final Arab positions could be seen on the opposite hill. From this thin open line on the hilltop, the Palmach boys had seen Arab armor coming at them from three sides, for this hill was the key to Jerusalem, overlooking the old city and the new. It had been marked as the junction point of the Arab Legion and the Egyptian forces. Added to them had been the irregular Arabs of the city.

A boy who had fought there stood with us and said, "They came with armored cars from over there," pointing to the Legion's way. A score of defenders had fallen, and Ramat Rachel had fallen that day. "But at night we came back, the Arabs were always afraid of night fighting."

"How did you come?"

"There, from the main gate, a squad of us."

"What did you have?"

"What? Grenades, and small arms. We got inside here and fought them and after we had killed enough of them, the rest got out."

There were no miracles in the war. The Arabs had retreated to the other side of the yard. Again and again the place had changed hands. In the end it was ours.

At the other side of the city, through the Bokharian quarter, past what had been the little Jerusalem zoo, one came to a street that connected with the university road. The street was cut across with trenches and tank traps. Every house was battered, half torn open, every wall was a jagged relic.

Here was the close of the parenthesis that began on the road to the university in Madrid.

The truce-made checkpost was at the end of the street, and we could see the Arab post some yards beyond. A priest came through, with a basket of greens.

A boy of eight was joking with the men on guard. "What squad are you from?" he asked, poking at the soldier's insignia.

"That's not the way to ask, chabub. First you ask what service, airforce, or engineers, or infantry."



"You're not airforce, I can tell that. You're a soldier on the ground."

"Then you ask what division, what battalion, what company, and what squad. That's how you ask."

Another soldier explained about the kid. "He's a pet, here. His family used to live in that house." He pointed to a ruin. "During the action, we lost contact completely with a unit up ahead. This little boy carried through their messages. So you see, he's a hero."

In the middle of Jerusalem, the small square in front of the old post office was utterly deserted. A high, newly built wall closed a lane to the old-city wall. Atop the ancient wall, Arab legionaries could be seen, their guns resting in the notches of the crenellation.

A Jewish policeman, looking just like a British constable, stood near the post office. "If you want a look, go inside that wrecked building opposite the wall," he said. As he waved, we saw the concentration-camp numbers stamped on his arm.

We clambered through the half-ruined, three-story building. It was like a war wreck anywhere, the same stink, the same litter, the same scrawled drawings on the walls, caricatures of the enemy, and outlines of naked women. We walked along a corridor that opened onto a series of small rooms. The place seemed vaguely familiar, perhaps an old office building. We stepped into one room; the windows were still sandbagged, and through the firing slits you could look across the lane at the Arabs on the old city wall.

The boys had held here, week after week; the Arabs had not penetrated one step into the city. We went to the forward end of the building; a direct hit had sheared it away, and hotel furniture had been shoved into the hole as a barricade. And then, looking down a curved stairway, I realized we had come through the rear part of a building I once had known.

Twenty years ago this had been the grand hotel of Jerusalem, the old Allenby Hotel, and it was here, in one of these rooms, that I had met John Gunther just after the riots of 1929, yes, in this very room with the sandbagged windows we had talked of whether I could remain a journalist, uninvolved.

It was here in Jerusalem that I had come to know that emotion is a part of reality.

* * *

Israel, born of emotion, has become real. Is that the end, then? Can we withdraw to some sort of peace, and the contemplation of beautiful things?

Is it the beginning of the end of anti-Semitism?

Is it the basis for self-acceptance in the Jews outside Israel?

For many years, it has been contended that the establishment of the Jewish homeland would have these effects. It cannot be assumed that the results will flow now as by magic. And it must be recognized that the results can come in a negative, as well as in a positive sense. For there are those who argue that anti-Semitism will end only when Jews outside Israel cease to be Jews, and that now is the time for them to do so.

On the positive side, it is generally recognized that the valor of our people in Israel has won universal admiration and given a new conception of the Jew to populations that were previously anti-Semitic, if only through folklore based on falsity. The fighting Jew, resourceful, spirited, modern, was a revelation to them. Even Julius Streicher, in jail in Nuremberg, cried out, "If I had known Jews were like that, I would have joined them. Yes, I would fight on their side!"

One need not take such words on faith, nor need one believe that anti-Semitism can be dissolved with one historic action; but it cannot be denied that the image of the young Jew of Israel is already replacing the image of the legendary Jew, the hook-nosed, bearded Fagin.

Yes, so much for the Jews of Israel. But what of the Jews of the rest of the world, who outnumber the Israelis tenfold? Will they still encounter anti-Semitism?

And the old old proposition is advanced again : Let the Jews outside Israel assimilate, and gradually disappear.

For why need they now remain Jews? Until now, the argument runs, every Jew carried the burden of race through a kind of primordial sense of obligation to insure the survival of the group.



Whether he hated his Jewishness or not, a deep inner sense of responsibility prevented him from abandoning his people—though of course many did succeed in overcoming this interdiction and there was always a seepage, a melting away.

But now, it is contended, the interdiction is lifted altogether. The burden of race no longer exists for the Jew in the world outside Israel, since the national center will preserve the race. The outside Jew is free.

And since he is free, why continue as a Jew? Why remain a stranger in whatever land he lives? Why emphasize separateness? Outside Israel the Jewish community-within-a-community will remain a sore and will continue to generate anti-Semitism.

Why preserve it then? Why not dissolve, assimilate?

This is the program offered by such logicians as Arthur Koestler, and it is no doubt a seductive one. Drawing up his accounts on the Palestine question, Koestler concluded that Jews outside of Palestine would do best to put an end to their "dual loyalties", to cease to bring up their children as Jews, and to trust that in a few generations their progeny would melt into world civilizations, as citizens of their various countries of habitation, whose cultures they would have adopted.

"The existence of the Hebrew state," wrote Mr. Koestler, "puts every Jew outside of Israel before a dilemma which will become increasingly acute. It is the choice between becoming a citizen of the Hebrew nation, and renouncing any conscious or implicit claim to separate nationhood.... The conclusion is that since the foundation of the Hebrew state, the attitude of Jews who are unwilling to go there, yet insist in remaining in a community in some way apart from their fellow citizens, has become an untenable anachronism."

This is one way of viewing the situation : by setting it up as a polarized problem and declaring that one must choose poles, go this way or that. Koestler chose to go on his way, with an occasional friendly glance behind him.

He did not choose lightly. Arthur Koestler was first in Palestine in 1925, and returned there repeatedly; he has written much, including a novel, about the country, and he is certainly an expert at self-examination.

Curiously enough, my own pattern has in many points coincided with that of Mr. Koestler. Like him, I was first in Palestine

in 1925, I have returned there repeatedly, and written novels about the country. Yet with much the same evidential experience, I come out with quite a different result.

Let us even imagine that, when we are bred with the forces of two different civilizations, we are subject to conflicting, polarized impulses. Is this necessarily destructive? In a simple lamp, positive and negative electrical energies course through a filament which glows with their joined energy, turned into light.

The human spirit glows, fusing in itself many ideational currents. Sometimes, it is true, these currents become too powerful, and we cannot contain them, and we burn out. Our problem is measure and control. To cut off all but one charge leaves darkness.

It seems to me that the assimilationists seek to simplify the Jew's situation through a kind of psychic amputation which is then to project itself through generations.

The operation is possible. It has been performed throughout the ages, and people have lived. Sometimes a faint awareness of the amputated member is carried for generations, as in the Marranos of Spain. And there are also cases of children born with the Jewish spiritual organ intact. We know that in all generations there have been Jews who left their folk; perhaps they were happy, perhaps they were not—there are always complicating individual factors.

The question is not really whether this can be done, with or without comfort; the question is whether Jews in great numbers want or need to do it, as the assimilationists feel they should. There are surgeons who are always eager to operate, whether or not the function of an organ is fully understood.

Undoubtedly, it is hard to be a Jew. It is also hard to be a Negro in America, hard to be a true Christian, hard to be an honest man in the world. Some hard things we avoid because they are unrewarding. Others we accept for their value.

For, while in the past many Jews carried their Jewishness as a compulsive burden, others carried it out of a sense of value.

But, we are constantly reminded, in this burden, in this pack, the Jew carried anti-Semitism with him, wherever he went. Why



on earth continue? argues Mr. Koestler. Why not throw away the pack, Jewishness, anti-Semitism and all?

This is like burning down the house to roast the pig. As our social intelligence advances, it should be possible for us to get at the causes of anti-Semitism, to thread them out even if they be entwined with all our qualities. It should be possible to work with the aim of getting rid of anti-Semitism alone. For the pack, contrary to Koestler's contention, is not then empty; the pack also contains our historic associations, our poetry, our ethics; from it we have drawn our endlessly evolving understanding of social justice.

These are positive values which we find in Judaism, and wish to keep.

Do I mean to suggest that no other people has ethical values? Every culture has these values in its own forms and degrees. On the highest level, it has often been remarked that the ethical standards of our current civilizations largely coincide. Where, then, do we find the problem of dual loyalty?

Loyalty is a national matter, a political matter, in the sense in which it is used by the proponents of the "dual loyalty" conflict. But if it is only a question of political loyalty, then it depends on the remote contingency of a political conflict between Israel and the United States, for most Jews. Presumably such a conflict would have to be resolved as it was resolved for German Americans and Italian Americans in the last war. It is scarcely a unique problem and scarcely a problem whose solution requires the Jew to dissolve away from his origin.

Actually, every man has a thousand loyalties of different kinds—to his family, to his local group, to his religion, to his folk morality, to his philosophy, to his love, to his nation, to his ambition. Any one of these can come into conflict with the others. Every day, situations arise in which the individual is torn between his loyalty to his religion and to his state—the case of Catholics in communist countries being an unhappy current example. In comparison with many of these conflicts, the contingency of a conflict of loyalties for the Jew is a minor one indeed.

There is, moreover, a broadening in mankind's view of nationalist loyalty. A vast number of people agree that some degree of national loyalty should be given up, if it were possible

to organize a world state. People hope that an international government can one day come into being in a way that will involve no real conflict in these loyalties. Yet communists are already confronted with the choice between their political loyalty to their own nation or to the Soviet Union which in their scheme acts as a trustee for an international order.

Man lives in a field of social forces; his effort is to draw them into harmony. In every man there is a hunger for simplification and unity—just as I felt once that I should be all of one piece by transforming myself into a Hebrew writer in Palestine. Some find unity through restriction and renunciation, through concentrating on one element in their lives—as do those who retire to religious orders.

But we can also seek to realize and to harmonize a multiplicity of forces. We can regard each dilemma as not necessarily insoluble, but as translatable into productive force, into light, so long as we have the strength to contain its currents. We can attempt to achieve a balance, a regulation of the elements out of which personality is composed.

It is this, I believe, that is the subject of each man's search. He must, to begin with, identify what is within himself. He must know himself.

I do not, for instance, feel that I am in an issueless dilemma as an American and as a Jew, and that I must renounce one culture or the other. I recognize that some individuals may feel, and for themselves rightly feel, that they have to do this. But we also know that there can be successful bicultural and multicultural personalities, and I do not see why the modern Jew shouldn't strive for such a realization, if it gives the best expression to all that is in him. No one argues against bilingual or multilingual people, indeed we feel they are richer and more useful for such accomplishment.

My whole story in this book, it seems to me, is the story of a natural pressure, the story of an element in myself—Jewishness—that strove and forced itself through every wall, to come out as a full part of my personality. My American sources were open by virtue of my upbringing in the land, and the surrounding approval toward their realization. But I had to discover for myself many of my Jewish sources, even though brought up amongst Jews, for my own people's attitude had already become



ashamed and confused. I had to work back, to give these elements free flow.

I am, then, a peculiar mixture of Chicago and Chassidism, of truth-seeking American reporter and truth-seeking son of the Torah.

Once in Paris, in a general talk about aims in life, Marek Szwarc asked me, "What do you want? What to you want to be?" and the definition that slipped out was a bit startling to me, for I blurted, "A good Jew".

I didn't say a great writer or a happy man or a good person or a good American Jew or a good American, though I want to be all of those, too. The first response, which I must regard as the pure response from within me where the matter had surely been long defined was, "a good Jew".

And what is that?

When we think of a "good American" we think in patriotic terms. When we think of "a good Christian" we think in moral terms. I suppose a good Jew is more of a moral than a patriotic concept, but there is an overtone of folk approval, sought.

For the term echoes back to childhood. This man was "a gutter Yid" and that one was not—simply as a person within the community. The essential quality was one of approval by the folk. Indeed, every man hungers for this approval, I suppose as the projection of fatherly approval. And amongst the Jews themselves, what was "good"? It was not necessarily piety, for then one said "a pious Jew". It was closer to "just", and it included a sense of responsibility and usefulness to the community.

This can only be discharged through some form of identification with that community, and here, in our condition, has been the difficulty. It was no longer a religious identification, and often not a social identification. There remained the sense of belonging to the folk, to the Jewish people, and indeed the folkway exerted the longest pull. Even the most unbelieving Jew, raised in a home where religious folk-customs were retained, still longs for homentashen on Purim, still feels a faint guilt at failing to fast on Yom Kippur, still feels outcast if he fails to participate in a feast on Passover. These fundamental symbols, connected with eating, link us to our horde, and it is interesting that the new Jewish civilization in Israel has detached them from

religion, and restored them as folk tradition. Purim and Passover, as celebrated in Tel Aviv and in such settlements as Yagur, are feasts of the folk, rather than religious occasions.

And for those who do not have even the feasts in memory, there is identification through behest, through a traditional sense, however vague, however attenuated, of the way a man of this people behaves. It takes the form of a consciousness that a Jew must be particularly careful of his relations with other people, a Jew must be upright, honest, fair, and wise. In the closed ghetto community it was religion that enforced this code. In the modern reformed Jewish congregation, religion became a system of ethics. And just as the new Israeli freed the folk festivals of their religious forms, so the Jew of today can accept Judaism's ethical goal without religious sanction.

Thus, we confirm our belief in Torah, even if it is without God.

Perhaps this is my identification as a Jew. I retain the attachment to the folk through a basic belief in Torah as the idea of Law.

And yet, godless though I may profess myself, I have responded with more than warmth to the mystical elements of Chassidism. As a writer, I have considered that I accept this material as folklore. But in my soul I knew that I take more than this from these legends. I accept them as expressions of truth, of spiritual comprehension from within the folk itself, just as I accepted the Messianic idea so long as I could embody it in the people instead of in an individual Messiah. In these years the people have indeed carried out the messianic return to Jerusalem in their exodus at night through forests, and over the snows of the Alps, and hunted across the Mediterranean, and through the Sinai of Cypress, with the Paulos and Miriams as their guides, and the Bendors to secure the land for them.

My response is surely not unique, and I believe the mystic strain links all of us to Judaism. In some, it finds expression through new contact with religion, in some, through Jewish studies, through activities in Jewish centers, through raising money for Israel, through dancing the hora, and in the extreme through formation of chalutz groups to go to Israel.

This last is the personal solution of those who feel an urge for complete identification with their people. It is interesting



that of the thousands of young American Jews who went to Israel to fight, only a small percentage decided to remain and establish themselves in the Jewish state. It would be shallow to consider that they rejected it. Obviously, they were not so disturbed by their Jewish orientation in America as to feel that it was an equation that could be solved only by crossing out all the American factors. They felt that they could handle themselves, that their lives were in the American frame.

Those who went to Israel to fight were expressing their sense of Jewish identification in the highest form, but in America itself there is a positive thrust toward Jewish self-realization. There is a virtual renaissance in Jewish scholarship, university students in increasing numbers are electing studies in the history, literature, sociology of their people. And the voluntary donations in fund-raising drives that annually total in the hundred million dollars would be impossible were there not a readiness to respond, to identify with Jewry everywhere.

This is not without ambivalence. Many Jews, as I have already pointed out, hasten to condition their identification by stating that with the coming into being of Israel they now feel themselves just like Italian, German, or Irish Americans, and while the parallels hold to a great extent, this sentiment must not be permitted to lead us into delusion.

The favorite parallel, for example, is with the Irish. They, too, won a valiant, unequal battle against the British for independence, they, too, have a religious background to their cohesiveness, they, too, congregate in fraternal organizations and in certain professions, and they, too, keep alive their folk allegiance.

But to my mind there is always a pathetic fallacy in seeking to prove ourselves "just like any other people" unless we consider that we are just like any other people, also, in having something unique about ourselves. The Irish parallel, for instance, falls away when it is reversed, for no Irishman feels the need of explaining that he is an Irish American just like a Jew may be a Jewish American.

There are some ways in which we are unique, and in our souls we know and are proud of this uniqueness. Why not then declare it, since the world knows it, too, instead of apologizing for it and pretending that it does not exist? Let us rather seek

to understand our special compound, so that we may live as what we are.

Whether we express our tie through religion or through Hadassah activity or through reading Jewish history—these are all ways of saying we are Jews. And knowing we are Jews does not end in identifying ourselves approvingly with the new Jews of Israel. This honeymoon will endure for some time, and the Jews of America will dance the hora, but when the excitement of being distantly related to the heroes wears off, and if there is no organic continuation of folk life, then it is quite likely that there can be a reaction toward the assimilationist idea.

But I believe in this continuation, for it has nourishment in the materials generated in the American Jewish community and in every Jewish community as well as in Israel. It may be recalled that in the days of the return from Babylon, the community that remained in Babylon created a Talmud as authoritative as the Talmud compiled in Palestine, and Babylon's Jewry has retained its identity until this very day.

And it is precisely this Talmudic idea, the idea of the social compact as the highest good, that we have today in common with the Jews of Israel. So long as Jews everywhere feel that a striving toward an ethical life is their chief concern, and as long as they refer in their striving to the material of their folk past, there can be no loss of identity.

Already, many Israelis understand that their being as Jews is something else than their being as Israeli nationals. Already it is clear that the realization of Israel as a state is not the realization of the ultimate goal of Judaism, which coalesces with the ultimate goal of all people in universal justice.

In the striving toward this goal, there must be continual interplay between Israel and Jewish communities everywhere. This can exist only if the Jews outside Israel recognize their connection freely in their own selves. It is not enough to say, "I don't hide the fact that I am a Jew". A real self-knowledge is necessary, a knowledge of the secret places where one resists identification. I believe I have come toward it, even if I have had to examine and exhibit the scars of my encounters as a Jew.

Like so many of us, I seem to have begun with an unconscious resentment and rejection of my Jewish "prison", which showed itself in my first story. Again and again through life, as



I experienced difficulties and some forms of suppression in the publication of my work, I experienced the castration fears so evident in my early stories of lost limbs, fears of deprivation; all through my life I have suffered from the expectation of being conditioned to failure, connected with the sense of being somehow a second-class citizen, a Jew, a person of the wrong sort. This fear found expression in the whole series of stories I wrote about artists-as-failures while in college, and though these expressions were undoubtedly intimately connected with personal conditioning they were, I believe, intensified in the Jewish pattern.

I began to struggle with the Jewish element first by trying quite unconsciously to "pass", as in *Reporter* and *Frankie and Johnny,* where I eliminated the Jewishness of my characters. Then I had a healthier perception of my difficulty, and tried to absorb and understand my Jewish material, all through the years in which I wrote *Yehuda, The Golden Mountain,* and *The Old Bunch.*

But the extent of my self-understanding as a Jew was so limited as to leave me with a typical sense of overrighteousness, a distortion in what I expected of others. I had not, so to speak, equalized this material within myself, in relationship to the world in which I lived.

Thus, I came into conflict, notably in the suppressive incident at *Paradise,* and in connection with the publication of *Citizens.* It was hard for me to see that the suppressive impulse came mostly from other Jews, who were perhaps even less at ease with their Jewish selves than I, rather than from gentiles. It was, then, an oversensitivity on the part of Jews themselves, and my own oversensitivity as a Jew, that led to some of my difficulties; and this is not to be "blamed" on ourselves, for it results of course from generations of conditioning on the part of the hostile world. I believe that many of us have not yet realized that we are freer to hold up our heads, particularly in America.

With greater insight, I might have behaved differently in the incidents in question, but as I was, I couldn't have. These incidents left severe wounds; after *Citizens* I was so confused as to be unable to write creatively for some time. It was only in the war that I was able to recover my feeling of free and full identification as a Jew. For through my war experiences I came

to recognize the universality of the guilt feeling, finding it even in the survivors, and I came to recognize the indestructability of the Jewish quality, in seeing its persistent life in the deepest spiritual ruins of Europe. It was then, at the end of the war, in my journey with the Torah, that I was able to state for myself the simplest values, which we all have to come to in our own way, no matter how fully and how consistently we have been confronted by them during our lives.

Again and again in my life I lived and created in my stories the myth of the search, the search for roots, the search for one's people, the search for the father, and I worked best when I answered it through identification with my people, as some find in coming to God. In *My Father's House,* I expressed this quite literally, in naming the land of Israel the father-substitute. Indeed, this was a wish. The finding of the ancient stone with the family name graven upon it was a mechanism. But it was at least and at last a clear expression of my sharing in the universal longing.

For in all my early work I was evidently trying to remove my discomfort as a Jew, I was trying to find a better home than the ghetto of childhood where the Italian kids terrified me, and where I felt an unjustified guilt in being a Jew. In all this I was seeking to prove that my people did not deserve to be despised but were noble. And as I said at the outset of this book, I believe that my journey is something of a token for most Jews.

This sense of shame is, I believe, now slowly being eradicated.

If then we become comfortable with our pack, if we do not feel we must discard it, but rather that we want to cherish what is in it, and if we find we now carry it quite readily, we have a different result than what is anticipated by those who contend that the establishment of Israel will cause Jews outside Palestine to drop the burden of race. We remain Jews by affirmation.

Then the corollary confronts us: if we remain Jews, must the anti-Semites remain anti-Semites?

In my view, anti-Semitism is not to be overcome by getting people to forget us, but to know us. This is born out already by the reaction felt all around us to the new Jew of Israel. But there is still a habit of "combatting anti-Semitism" by pointing out that anti-Semites are evil people, by coupling them with other socially condemned, such as fascists. Many books and



films have taken this approach. *Crossfire* pictured the anti-Semite as a murderer who should be shot down like a dog. *Gentleman's Agreement* pictured anti-Semites as hypocrites and attempted to shame people into dropping their prejudices. These works had useful effect. But it is my suspicion that more people resented them than were educated by them.

The people who don't like us are more skillful in their propaganda. One hook-nosed Fagin does more to perpetuate the mythical Jew than a thousand preachments against anti-Semitism.

The task is to substitute the true image for the mythical image —even in ourselves. For we are not only Jews but people of the world, and as people of the world we, too, absorb the Fagin legend until, like little Robert in Palestine, we want at the same time to defend our mother against the Arab kids' dirty-Jew curses, and to get invited to parties where Jews are not allowed. We, too, have to get rid of the Fagin image, and we will only do it by seeing ourselves completely, which means by also seeing that self-hated image within ourselves.

My own efforts must therefore be to show us as what we are. Happily, now, through the people of Israel, the world has been able to see what Jews are like when acting in their own freed spirit. This is the new beginning. From this we will more readily learn that Jews outside Israel also can be known for what they are.

The formation of the state of Israel is not, then, the end of the Jewish question, but a new basis upon which positive values can be erected. Our continuing Jewish culture will be related to living Israel rather than to a dying European Jewry. But it will be founded always on the historic memory of the folk, and it will contain, too, the admixture of every local community culture.

I believe that Jewish children should be raised in this context. They may now learn Hebrew as a living language rather than as a collection of sounds which they do not understand, but recite by rote in imposed prayers. I think it will seem natural for Jewish children outside Israel to learn Hebrew as their second language, rather than French or German or Spanish, and it is interesting that there has already been a considerable increase of Hebrew teaching in public schools in Jewish neighborhoods.

A powerful interpenetration of cultural patterns is expected to take place through abundant traffic between Israel and America. Already there are extensive plans for student residences in Israel and for lengthy stays of Israeli students in American Jewish communities. Some Jews undoubtedly wonder whether the stimulation of so strong an interest in Israel will arouse conflicts in their children, relative to their American selves. Some such conflicts must arise before their can be full self-understanding.

There will undoubtedly be an intensified movement to attract young Americans to settle in Israel, that there may be American qualities in the composite Jew of the home country. Is this to be feared? Even if the numbers should eventually reach into tens of thousands, such a migration would not attain the significance of a general movement. Actually, it has already been pointed out that those who feel so powerful an impulse represent the far end of a scale that goes all the way from the self-hating assimilationist through the ranges of religious and social identification with Jewish life, to the nationalist Jew. The vast part of the American Jewish population is somewhere in the middle of the scale. Their lives as Jews must be equated in America, but, I think, with a good deal of sustenance from Israel.

And if the American Jew is to absorb cultural sustenance from Israel, is he to pay for it only in dollars contributed to campaigns? There is also a function of the diaspora Jew toward Israel. By the very existence of the greater Jewish community outside the Jewish homeland, the Jews of Israel are constrained to think in world terms. Many visitors to Israel have already noted, with disquiet, the signs of an exaggerated nationalism, the development of a chauvinist spirit. It would be the greatest pity if the liberalizing spirit of our people now turned and became translated into chauvinism.

To prevent this can be a function of the Jew abroad. The constant interrelationship with Jewish communities all over the world cannot permit the development of a rigid nationalism in Israel. If the Jewish culture in Israel is based on a sense of national at-homeness, the Jewish culture outside Israel will always supply the necessary counterbalance of cosmopolitanism.

I think it is safe to say that the chauvinist tendencies so noticeable in the first flush of statehood are temporary and highly



exaggerated. Indeed, it is the burden of national survival that may now be set down in Israel, and Jews may now look toward the world order, as a people on a footing with other people, as respectable home owners with a share in community responsibility. Having accomplished the national phase, we may now look to the international sphere.

There are many of us who live to a considerable extent in that sphere. There are cosmopolitans—even, in hostile terms, homeless cosmopolitans, such as the very rich and the very poor, and artists, and now a growing number of workers in international organizations, and there will always be many Jews among them, who accept a certain degree of homelessness as a balance against chauvinism; even the great Jewish communities dwelling amongst other folk, such as the American Jewish community, must be regarded as never entirely at home, and therefore as deterrents to the growth of chauvinism, as resistants to fatally complete polarization.

And in this period, the holding of this role becomes something of a mission in itself. For exaggerated nationalist feeling is being used to bring about a cleavage in the world today. Our particular problem as Jews is swallowed in the problem of every living being: the conflict between our desire for individual freedom, and our desire for security in the group. These two ideas have been assigned as opposite poles, and we are being led to believe that the world is divided, that we must choose between them, that on one side stands a civilization that treasures the individual, on the other side a civilization that treasures the group.

This, like the dilemma of "dual loyalty", is a dilemma only if humanity consents to it; the ideals of individual liberty and social good are incompatible only through oversimplification, only if we insist that they do not both exist within each other. And there must be enough of us to insist that the solution is not through splitting but through fusion.

Indeed, in the social forms developing in Israel itself, as I have recounted, people found ways to work toward both goals concurrently.

We must believe in humanity, in our ability to find these solutions, malformed and crippled as we are. I believe the survival force in us, and the curative force in us, to be stronger

than the force of destruction. Of this, all I have seen of my people has served as proof.

I have sought a way to function in human society as one of those—a writer—whose special task is to further human self-understanding. I have felt that this required self-knowledge, folk identification, and a concerned universalism. We all spend much of our lives in trying to discover and open the channels to self realization, and in an augmented view this may apply to the human race as it creeps toward the realization of humanity's potentials.

The example of Jewish history in the past few years can give courage to all humanity: if there was a messianism in the Jewish folk that enabled it to rise out of death to attain Israel, then humanity as a whole must possess the fuller messianism, and contain within itself the force to attain universal peace and justice.

In this direction we are all in search, and it is the best sign of our vitality that our search is without end.

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